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OR,

The Raiders and Red Riders of the Rio.

A Romance of the Clear Water Stockade.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "THE FLYING YANKEE," "THE
SHADOW SHIP," "BUCK TAYLOR," "THE
BUCKSKIN ROVER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE FIRE-FIEND.

THROUGH the darkness, and the gloom of an approaching storm, a long line of horsemen wound slowly over the rolling prairie; appearing like some monster serpent, creeping upon his prey. And the sting of the serpent was not more deadly than the stroke of those who rode that

ON, ON, IN THE MAD RACE RUSHED THE LONE SCOUT, OUTLAW, WILD BEAST AND
UNTAMED MUSTANG.

trail, wending their way from a scene of carnage and ruin back to their fastnesses in the mountains, where the avenging arm of retribution could not strike them.

It was the robber band of Don Ramon, the Raider Bravo of the Rio Grande, who for several years had been the scourge of both the American and Mexican borders, defying all attempts to capture him, and from his stronghold in the hills beating back his many foes.

Returning from a successful raid, and with his half a hundred horsemen laden down with plunder, Don Ramon was content, and rode at the head of the column, grimly silent and stern, while, ever and anon, he would glance toward the heavy storm-clouds rolling across the heavens like an inky pall, and threatening ere long to break with fury upon the prairie.

Suddenly, from out the gloom ahead, broke a vivid flash—momentarily lighting up the scene.

That instant of light revealed a horseman, perhaps two hundred yards distant, almost spectral-looking in the weird circle of fiery brightness, with background and surrounding of gloom.

Then followed the crack of a rifle, the whir of a bullet, and, with a bitter curse, Don Ramon felt a stinging pain in his left arm.

"After him, a score of you, and run him to his den," shouted the startled and angry chief; and away dashed a dozen horsemen in the direction from whence had come the shot, while the long line quickly doubled up, and came to a halt.

Slowly the moments passed, and no shout of triumph, or rifle-shot off on the prairie told of the success of the pursuit of the daring foe, and Don Ramon, whose wound had been dressed as well as circumstances would admit, gave the order to move on once more.

But hardly had the order been given when another flash, another report, this time from the rear, and an outlaw cried out in agony; his arms wildly lashed the air, and the next moment he fell dead upon the prairie, just as the party returned, unsuccessful in their pursuit.

But, away they sped again, in chase, and slowly the minutes dragged, until, one by one all returned with the same report:—no enemy could be found.

Then a superstitious dread seemed to come upon all, and closely they huddled until the stern voice of their chief ordered them to forward once more.

In the mean time the skies grew blacker, and the gloom on the prairie denser, while the roll of thunder was deep and threatening.

Again the serpentine line moved forward, men and horses tired out with their long and hard ride, and longing for shelter, rest and food.

But their deadly foe still hung on their trail, for again flashed forth his fatal rifle, and again an outlaw fell.

"Maledicite! Are we to be shot down singly? Curses on this black night!"

But scarcely had the land bandit cursed the darkness, when a vivid lance of lightning sped from the inky heavens to the earth, and shivered into arrows of fire as it struck the prairie, while a crash of thunder followed that seemed to rock the very world.

Every eye was blinded by the flash, every ear deafened by the thunder, every heart started with dread, while silence like death fell upon all.

But only for an instant, then a dozen voices snouted:

"Behold! the prairie is on fire!"

It was true—the lightning had ignited the tall, dry prairie grass, and squadrons of fiery demons seemed charging down upon the outlaw band, for the stiff Gulf-gale swept toward them.

"For your lives men! to the motte!" and Don Ramon's voice startled all to action.

With cries to their horses, the brigands bounded away across the prairie, a rushing, skurrying mass of terror-stricken beings, for well they knew their danger—a wall of flame was behind them a couple of leagues, their haven of safety, a copse of timber, nearly a league in their front.

Yelling, cursing, and praying, in frenzied fury at their danger, the raiders urged their straining horses to greater speed; but they, poor brutes, well knew their danger and every nerve and muscle was strung to fly from the avalanche of fire rushing upon their trail.

Up from the prairie grass sprung buffalo, wolf and deer, and unmindful of their worst enemy, man, ran side by side with him in the mad race for life!

Far off over the prairie, plainly visible in the lurid light, skurried a drove of wild mustangs, heading, as were mankind and wild beast alike, for the distant timber.

Suddenly a wild shout was heard in front, and an outlaw, whose fleeter steed kept him in advance of his comrades, pointed excitedly before him.

All followed the direction of his outstretched arm, and a number of voices cried:

"The Death Trailer! the Death-Shot Scout!"

"By Heaven! yonder is our old foe, men; it is he who has dogged our trail this night. On, on, and we'll drive him to his death!" shouted the Don, and a few bounds of his splendid steed carried him to the front.

The object that had attracted the attention of the outlaws was a horseman, dashing along in a sweeping gallop, and the glitter of his rifle and pistols, and silver mounting of his saddle and trappings, were plainly visible, as the firelight fell upon them.

His horse was a long-bodied, slender-limbed blood bay, whose gaunt form denoted both speed and endurance, and, unmindful of the weight of his rider, he swept along with a conscious power of strength and the speed of a deer.

The rider was clad in a suit of buckskin, leggings, hunting-shirt, and moccasins, all beaded handsomely and worked with quills of various colors, while a broad sombrero, turned up in front, sheltered his head.

His face, as he turned toward the fire, was strangely handsome; the eyes shone with intelligence, and sparkled with excitement.

It was a strange face, one that would appear at home in the fashionable drawing-room, and yet did not seem out of place there on that wild Southwest frontier.

His hair was worn short, and his jaws beardless, which showed to advantage his firm mouth and pearl-white teeth.

A repeating rifle was slung at his back, ready for use, and in his belt were a pair of silver-mounted revolvers, and a long knife, while a coiled lasso hung at his saddle-bow.

Without the quiver of a muscle, the man glanced back at the double danger behind—the wall of flame, roaring, cracking, hissing as it swept along, and the mass of outlaws eager for his blood.

On, on, in the mad race rushed the lone scout, outlaw, wild beast and untamed mustang, and behind them came the dread pursuer, which no man could conquer.

Well in the front rode the solitary horseman, neither urging his unmatched steed, nor allowing his enemies to gain upon him.

Before him loomed the ridge of timber, looking like an island in the ocean, and thither he was heading.

A few more bounds of his steed, and he disappeared in the green covert, just as his ears caught the sound of a wild shriek from the despairing wretch, whose struggling horse had been unable to save him from the flames.

As if reveling in its first victim the fire-fiend hurtled on, and again and again there arose the wild shriek of man and steed, as those in the rear were embraced in the arms of fire, and madly did those in the front strain and spur to escape the awful destroyer on their trail.

At length the black steed of Don Ramon darted into the timber shelter, and a triumphant shout burst from his lips as he felt that he was saved.

One by one the outlaw riders dashed in, and side by side with them rushed a heaving mass, mustang, buffalo, deer and wolf commingling.

"Saved, by Heaven!" cried the Bravo Chief, as he beheld the last of his band that could escape, find shelter, but his face grew pallid, his lips stern set, as his ears caught the death-cry of those who had been less fortunate.

"Come, men! we must not remain idle, for our enemy is hemmed in—the fire cuts him off to the southward, and the gulch to the northward, he cannot cross. He is our game at last—his last death-shot has been fired!" and Don Ramon smiled with grim confidence, as he led the way into the more secluded portion of the motte.

CHAPTER II.

A WILD LEAP FOR LIFE.

WITH the roar of a tornado, the fiery avalanche rushed up to the timber, hurling its heat far before it into the leafy coverts; but it suddenly recoiled, writhed, hesitated, and with nothing to consume in its front, swept to the southward of the timber, and again skurried onward across the prairie.

As their dread enemy struck the motte, Don Ramon and his men sought shelter in a small ravine; but, finding that the fire did not penetrate, and was speeding away to the southward, fatigued and haggard though they were, they

at once sallied forth in search of their human enemy, who they knew was shut off from escape to the northward, by a huge gulch, a ravine, that bordered the timber in that direction, and whose precipitous sides and great depth rendered it impassable to a horseman.

The light from the burning prairie still rendered all as bright as noonday, and deploying into a long line the outlaws began to slowly advance, to drive their daring foe to bay.

But, the hunted horseman seemed in no mood to conceal himself, as had the wolves and wild animals upon gaining the thicket, for, suddenly, the crack of a rifle was heard, and a raider fell from his saddle, while a piercing war-cry echoed through the woods!

Instantly all turned their gaze in the direction from whence came the shot, and beheld the object of their search, standing by the side of his steed, not two hundred yards away!

A yell of triumph broke from the outlaws, and loudly Don Ramon shouted:

"At him, men, and take him alive."

Like a solid mass the prairie brigands spurred toward the horseman, who regarded their approach with a fearlessness that denoted perfect confidence in himself, or a total disregard for his fate.

Yet, though the single horseman appeared so utterly indifferent to his terrible danger, he was not at all so, for his piercing eyes had taken in at a glance all his chances of escape, all the terrors of his situation.

Finding that he was entrapped by the wide and deep gulch behind him, and hemmed in by the outlaws in his front and upon either flank, he quickly made up his mind to bring matters to a crisis.

Dismounting, he gave his steed a drink from a spring at his feet, tightened his girths, looked to his weapons, and with a bound was again in the saddle, and riding at full speed directly for the ravine!

"Is he mad, to attempt that desperate leap? No, he cannot mean it—it is mere bravado," cried Don Ramon, as he reined his horse back with a look of horror, while his example was followed by every one of his followers.

But, like the wind, the dread Death-Shot Scout rode on, seated low in his saddle and nerved to the daring work before him, and heading for the wide, dark spot, that marked the ravine in his front.

Suddenly a series of wild cries broke from his lips, which seemed to excite every nerve in his gallant steed, for it sped on with the speed of a bird, his flight keenly watched by the brigands, who believed he was rushing to certain death.

Nearer and nearer he drew to the awful leap, and then, crouching low in his saddle, a wild yell broke from his lips, and with a snort of rage or fright, his splendid steed shot up into the air, and forward, with terrible force.

In an instant horse and rider seemed to hang stationary, as though poised in air, and then, down, down they came, and with every muscle quivering, every nerve strung, eyes flashing, and hard-drawn breath, the splendid animal safely touched the other side, his hoofs ringing clear as they struck the solid ground.

A wild yell of triumph broke from the Death-Shot's lips, a wave of his broad sombrero around his head, and away darted the steed like an arrow across the prairie!

"Brave Comanche, my noble friend—bravely done! You cleared over thirty feet in that grand leap, and saved your master from death and yourself from the dishonor of an outlaw rider," and the horseman patted his prairie companion affectionately upon the neck, and rode on at a swinging gallop over the plain.

As the dismal gray of approaching dawn spread over the prairies, the horseman drew near to a long line of straggling timber, here and there spreading into a considerable grove.

To the practical eye of a plainsman it was evident that the timber bordered a river-bank, and, as if thoroughly acquainted with the locality, the horseman headed toward one of the longer clumps of trees, through which was dimly visible the outline of some rude, but substantial structure.

As he rode along the light increased, until, when within a short distance of the grove, the sun arose above the prairie horizon, and its rays fell upon a large log building, surrounded by a stout stockade.

The notes of a bugle cutting the crisp morning air at once proved that it was not the advanced homestead of some bold frontiersman, but the home of the brave soldiers who were thus thrown between the settlements and the fierce hordes that desolated the border.

As the horseman approached the stockade, a

number of soldiers were visible, who gave him a cheering welcome as he rode into the inclosure.

"The commandant wishes to see you immediately, scout," said an elderly officer, wearing the uniform of a captain of cavalry.

"I will go to him at once," replied the horseman, dismounting, and calling to a buckskin-clad youth to look after the comforts of his steed, the horseman walked rapidly toward a large cabin in the center of the stockade, and which fronted on a clear stream of considerable size, upon both sides of which the fort and its inclosure was built.

Upon the piazza of the cabin stood an officer of fine appearance, with iron-gray hair and mustache, and looking every inch the soldier that he was.

It was Colonel Linville, the commandant of the Clear Water Outpost, and a large expanse of frontier territory.

"Well, Randolph, I am glad to see you back, for I feel that I can act now with my eyes open," and the colonel warmly extended his hand to the scout, who asked, quietly:

"Anything of importance, colonel?"

"Indeed there is. The train with which my daughter was coming out across the plains was attacked by Indians and so worsted that it has returned to the settlements, and Kate writes me, by a special courier, that she is coming on under the escort of Lieutenant Merwin and four troopers."

"It is a most reckless undertaking, especially at this time, colonel, for Don Ramon is on the war-path as well as the Comanches. With the former I had a brush last night, and nearly the whole outlaw band came near destruction, as did I also, by the prairie taking fire from a stroke of lightning."

"Indeed! we saw the light of the fire, and I congratulate you upon your escape; but was Don Ramon on the trail that Kate must come?" asked the colonel, anxiously.

"He had crossed it, having been on a raid against the lower settlements; but the fire made him drop his plunder, and half a dozen of his vile crew were burned to death—"

"Ha! as bad as that, was it? Well, what is to be done about Kate, Randolph, for she is now on her way here?"

"I will take a detachment of cavalry and meet her, sir."

"You shall have them—nay, I will go myself with you, and we will start—when?"

"As soon as I get a little rest and food, sir. Both Comanche and myself have had a hard time of it, since we left the fort, three days ago."

"Very well; we will start after dinner. Now come in and breakfast with me, and then you can spend the morning in sleep," and Colonel Linville led the way into his comfortable quarters, where the two sat down to a substantial repast.

CHAPTER III.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

AS the sun neared the western horizon, and cast long shadows across the prairie, a detachment of cavalry, well armed and mounted, left the Clear Water Outpost, and struck the trail leading to the eastward.

At the head of the troopers rode Colonel Linville, a young lieutenant, and Ralph Randolph, the Scout, whom the pests of the Texan border had named the Death-Shot Scout and the Indians had christened Death Triller, from his deadly marksmanship on horse or afoot and from his relentless pursuit on the trail.

At a rapid gallop the squadron dashed on until at nightfall they halted to go into camp, many miles from the stockade.

As was his wont before camping, Death Triller, as the scout was now generally called, made a circuit of the camp, to see that no immediate danger hovered near, while the troopers set about preparing their evening meal.

Colonel Linville threw himself down upon a blanket, and with a cigar between his lips, was thinking of the balmy meeting soon to take place between himself and daughter, from whom he had been separated three long years, the maiden having been at boarding-school in New York.

Suddenly a wild cry was heard, and all recognized the well-known voice of the Stockade Scout; then followed a few shots in quick succession, terrific yells, and, by the time Colonel Linville was on his feet, there swept down upon the camp a large band of horsemen, firing and yelling as they came.

Taken wholly by surprise Colonel Linville and his gallant troopers could only throw themselves speedily upon the defensive, for in the

early twilight they recognized their old enemies, the Bravo Riders of the Rio Grande.

But they also seemed taken by surprise, and though doubling the troopers in numbers, rode quietly on, not hesitating for a combat.

But as they sped through the camp the old colonel, and a dozen of his troopers beheld a sight that nerved them to desperation. The flashes of the pistols revealed a woman's form, bound to her saddle, and riding between two of the prairie brigands.

"Ob, God have mercy! my daughter! my poor child!" and the voice of Colonel Linville was full of anguish, for he beheld his idolized daughter in the power of those cruel and desperate men.

But like a cyclone the outlaws passed on, and loud rung the voice of the brave old soldier—

"Into the saddle, troopers! Were they ten times our number I would attack them. Men, yonder outlaws have my child in their power!"

A yell of rage broke from the gallant cavalymen. With eager energy they threw their saddles upon their horses, and, unmindful of the few who had fallen, mounted in hot haste.

With pallid face and set teeth Colonel Linville flung himself into his saddle, and the order to move was upon his lips when a tall form dashed into their midst, and the clear voice of Death Triller was heard, as he hastily saddled his own splendid steed.

"Form to repel attack! Ready, all! There comes your enemy!"

Surprised, the troopers turned to the right about to discover, rushing upon them, from the same direction from whence had come the outlaws, a large, rapidly-moving mass of horsemen.

Then the wild war-cry of the Post Scout was heard, and a terrible response was given from a hundred throats.

"The Comanches! the Comanches!" cried the troopers, and they poured a hot fire upon their advancing foes.

But, it failed to check them, and, with mad yells, the red terrors came on; the shock followed; there was a momentary struggle, cries of hatred, defiance, and despair; flashing of pistols and rifles; clashing of saber against knife and lance, and the Comanches passed on, leaving sad havoc behind them, for many a trooper had fallen, many an Indian had given his last war-whoop; but the mass sped swiftly on—their game was in their front, they were on the trail of the border brigands!

In the first shock the steed of Colonel Linville fell, shot through the heart, and pinned down beneath the animal he expected to be crushed to death beneath the hoofs of the half-wild mustangs that rushed over him.

But, the savages passed on, and then two troopers, who had seen him fall, ran to his aid, and springing to his feet, he cried:

"Men, those outlaws must not escape! They have my daughter."

"Colonel, we have not a half-dozen men unhurt sir; we have suffered severely in the two charges!" urged the young lieutenant who acted as aid, and was suffering from a wound in the arm.

"Too true, too true, Raymond. Duty calls us here with my wounded and dead; but where is Randolph?"

Search was at once made for the scout but nowhere was he to be found, and an examination of the dead and wounded proved that he was not among those.

"It is strange—can he have been captured?" asked Raymond.

"No; he is doubtless on their trail for some good reason. Perhaps he saw poor Kate, and intends to rescue her, and if man can do it, he can. But, Raymond, we must not remain here, equipped as we are; so let us bury the dead, and then move toward the stockade as fast as we can with the wounded," and the colonel set to work with a will, though his heart was almost crushed with the blow it had received, and his fears for his daughter's safety.

And as he worked at his sad task, he swore he would visit a terrible retribution upon the outlaws, who had stolen from him his child.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEATH-SHOT ON THE WAR-PATH.

WHEN the Death-Shot Scout found himself in the midst of the moving mass of Comanches, he drew a revolver in each hand, and spurred through his dusky foes, out upon the prairie.

As the colonel had said, the scout had beheld the girl prisoner in the hands of the outlaws, and feeling assured that she was Kate Linville, he at once determined to keep near, for should the Comanches, who were evidently in chase of the ranch robbers, overtake and

attack them, circumstances might place it in his power to rescue the maiden.

Therefore leaving Colonel Linville and his troopers to take care of themselves, Ralph Randolph rode swiftly out upon the prairie, and keeping the raiders in sight, held steadily along on their flank, where neither the pursued or pursuer could see him in the darkness.

The outlaws seemed better mounted than were the Comanches, and slowly drew further and further away from them, until midnight, when they halted for rest, their red pursuers being then several miles behind.

A hasty stop in a motte to refresh their horses, a draught of cool water, a bite of juicy grass, and the men of Don Ramon were again in the saddle, just as the dark forms of their enemies came in sight, following their trail with the persistency of bloodhounds.

But the rest had greatly refreshed their steeds, and the border pirates drew rapidly away from the Comanches once more.

Thus the night passed away, with hard riding and short rests, and daylight discovered the two bands many miles apart.

The day was spent in the same fatiguing journey, Death-Shot Scout keeping afar off on the prairie, so that he could just hold his foes in view. At sunset the foot-hills were reached, then the raiders felt that they were safe, and slackened their pace, although, far off on the prairie, they beheld their untiring pursuers still coming on.

Fully acquainted with the country the lone trailer well knew the place where the outlaws would strike the foot-hills, and having the advantage in the speed and endurance of his noble steed Comanche, he made a rapid circuit, struck the ridge at a point higher up, and seeking the trail along which they would pass, soon found a secluded retreat, where his noble steed was rewarded with a luxurious feed and a drink from a mountain stream.

Leaving Comanche to rest and refresh himself to his heart's content, the silent trailer hastily partook of a pocket lunch, and looking to his weapons, walked at a rapid pace up the valley.

After half an hour's walk he came to a precipitous hillside, around which the trail led to the stronghold of the Bravo Chief.

There he sat down to await the result; but the hours passed away, and no outlaws came in view.

"Strange! It is nearly sunset, and they should have passed two hours ago. Perhaps they have halted to ambush the red-skins. Yes, that is the case, I am assured."

As if determining upon his course, the lone scout retraced his steps to the little glen, where he had left Comanche, whom he found ready and willing for the trail once more.

A few moments more and Randolph was slowly and cautiously riding in the direction where he supposed the outlaws to have halted; but, no sound came to his ears of battle, and knowing that the red-skins had had ample time to come up, he deemed it most singular indeed.

At length he came to where the prairie trail struck the foot-hills, and a glance upon the prairie proved that the Comanches were not in sight, while an examination of the ground showed him that the outlaws had turned short off to the left, upon entering the highlands, and that their foes had followed closely on their trail.

"Come, Comanche, we must look more closely into this matter, for those outlaws are up to some devilish trick—come," and Comanche moved forward at a rapid canter on the trail of those that had gone before.

Just at dark he came to where the trail crossed a considerable stream, and here his quick eye detected a small track leading from the main one, and going up into the hills.

"Three horsemen took this trail—by Heaven! I believe they have sent the maiden this way to the stronghold, while the band continues on to entrap the red-skins. Comanche, we will follow the three tracks!" and the untiring steed was urged on, his master believing that good fortune would soon place Kate Linville under his protection.

When darkness crept over the scene, the scout dismounted, to the better follow the trail, and after an hour's walk the glimmer of a fire in the distance caused his heart to throb with delight.

In the broad glare of that camp-fire stood four persons, three of whom were rude, savage-looking men, at a glance recognizable as belonging to the band of Don Ramon, the Bravo.

The other was of a different race, for his red skin showed his Indian blood.

He was a slight and gracefully-formed youth, straight as an arrow, and his long, black hair

hung far down his back, while a crown of eagle-feathers was upon his head.

He was not in his war-paint, and his handsome, fearless face was plainly visible, while his eagle eyes flashed forth fire and defiance at his captors, for he was strongly bound.

At his feet lay a rifle, a bow and quiver of arrows, a knife, and a lance, while in the edge of the bushes was a dead mustang, evidently the animal he had ridden.

In the background were hitched three horses, the steeds of the outlaws confronting the Indian warrior, for, young as he was, the bunch of scalps at his belt, proved that he was a brave.

Down his arms, oozing from a small bullet wound, trickled a stream of blood, proving that he had not been made captive without an effort for his life.

Before him stood his cruel-faced captors, one of whom cried:

"String 'im up, I say, pards, 'kase we hain't time to waste on a Injin."

"That's so, fellers! H'iste him—"

"Whar's the use o' exartin' ourselves to hang 'im? Let's shine daylight thro' him. I'll do it," and the third speaker drew a pistol from his belt.

"All right, Bony; you'se ust ter the biz o' killin' with weepins; but yer see I b'lieve in hangin', 'kase I was sheerif onst, an' that was my callin'."

"It's all the same, whether yer strangle a man or hang him; but I thinks it's a more decent way to put a light in a feller with a bullet, an' I'm jist goin' to make a targit o' that red-skin afore he can wink his blinkers—"

"That's so, Bony; a Injin hain't got no more use livin' than a frog has use for a tail."

Bony deliberately stepped back a dozen paces, and was raising his pistol to take aim at the helpless youth, who fearlessly met his gaze, and without the quiver of a muscle, when there came a flash, a report, and the outlaw fell dead!

Ere the two remaining renegades could fly, a horseman suddenly spurred into their midst, and another of the bad trio fell beneath his deadly aim, while the third bounded into the dark covert of the forest and disappeared.

Dismounting quickly, the Death-Shot Scout stepped up to the youth and severed his bonds, while he said kindly, speaking in the Comanche tongue:

"I was just in time to save my red brother."

"What! does the pale-face chief, the great foe of the Comanche, call a red-skin his brother?" asked the youth, in a tone of surprise.

"I am the foe of the red-men who come down into the settlements and murder the pale-faces. You are the son of the great chief of the Comanches; let the young warrior go to his people and tell them that Death Trailer has saved his life."

"My white brother speaks true; he has saved the life of the son of Moochoo; but, how knows the white brave this?"

"I know your race and your customs as well as you do yourself, Comanche. Do you think me blind, that I cannot see the feathers you wear?"

"The white brave is a great chief, and Prairie Wolf owes him his life; but the heart of Prairie Wolf is sad, for his beautiful sister, the Red Lily, the daughter of the great Moochoo, and the pride of the Comanches, is in the power of the wicked pale-faces."

"Ha! Is the Red Lily a prisoner to the Raiders of the Rio Grande?" asked Death Trailer, with surprise.

"Prairie Wolf has spoken; the Red Lily was taken by the pale-face robbers of the hills. Prairie Wolf was running her trail when his mustang was shot and he was wounded."

"It is too bad that your beautiful sister is in the power of the bad Bravos," said the Death-Shot Scout, as if more to himself than to the Indian, and then he continued, musingly:

"If I could recapture the Red Lily I would make old Moochoo my best friend, for I have already a claim upon him in saving the life of his brave son."

"Come, Prairie Wolf, let me see to your wound, and then we will together follow the same trail, for I have a maiden to rescue from the hands of the Bravos also."

The wounded arm was skillfully dressed, and telling the Indian to mount one of the horses of the renegades, and lead the others, the pale-face and red-skin set off, as friendly as though they had never been enemies.

But though any Comanche brave would have given his right arm for the scalp of the great Death Trailer, and the scout had been the bitterest foe of the tribe of the Prairie Wolf when they were out on their forays, there was kind-

ness, now, in the heart of each for the other. They were bound upon a mission of deadly peril to both—to wrest the Red Lily and Kate Linville from the power of the detested Don Ramon and his outlawed confederates.

CHAPTER V.

A DEADLY VISITOR.

THE dismal gray of approaching dawn was stealing over the eastern skies, and casting its leaden hue over hill and prairie, as two horsemen drew rein in a small ravine, from whence the distant glimmer of half a dozen camp-fires were visible.

Dismounting from their horses one of the men took the rein of each while the other silently glided toward the timber, wherein were encamped a foe he had every cause to dread.

The deep sleep, that comes before dawn rested upon the camp, and all were lost in slumber except the guards, who, believing that lonely task was nearly ended, leaned sleepily against a tree, to catch forty winks ere they would have to awaken to the duties of the day.

Drowsily the horses stood about, or lay down upon the soft sward, while their masters, wrapped in their blankets, their feet toward the smoldering fires, and their heads upon their saddles, slept most peacefully, yet ready to spring to busy action or deadly strife at the first cry of alarm.

And yet, how strange that peaceful sleep should come to those men, whose lives were dark with crime, whose natures were desperate, blood-stained their hands, and sin-dyed their hearts; while, banded as outlaws of the prairies, the hand of every honest man was against them.

But they slept in peace, trusting in their guards, who were overcome by drowsiness, and beheld not a tall, agile form, approaching with the stealthy step of a panther, directly upon them.

Had the outer sentinel, his back supported by a large tree, his equilibrium sustained by his rifle used as a prop, beheld the dark form creeping upon him, he would never have closed his eyes in slumber, but rallied himself for the fearful death-struggle to come.

Grayer and grayer grew the skies, nearer and nearer crept the form, deeper and deeper dozed the sentinel—then suddenly the tall form rose up in his front, a hand of iron grasped his throat, a heavy blow drove downward the keen blade of a knife, a crouching sound followed, a moan, a relaxing of the muscles, a death-rattle in the throat, and a strong arm gently lowered the dead body to the ground, and

"The sentinel was off duty forever."

An instant later the daring invader of an outlaw camp stood motionless, his ears strained to catch the slightest sound, his eyes endeavoring to pierce the gloom of the timber.

Then, as if having made up his mind to his course, he strode boldly into the camp, picking his way here and there among the sleepers, the very boldness of his act disarming suspicion in the minds of the few who were awakened by his step as he glided by them, and believing him one of their own number, they turned over for another nap, ere called to duty.

But there was one who watched his approach, and the eyes of the watcher beheld him glide hither and thither as though searching for some object.

Presently a burning brand flickered into a blaze, and then died away, leaving the darkness greater than before; but, that instant of light was sufficient, for the bold invader moved quickly forward and stooped over the one who had watched him gliding among the trees.

Bending over he beheld the form of a woman at his feet—a woman whose hands were bound behind her by rawhide thongs, proving that she was a captive.

"Come, I would save you; but, be as silent as the grave," whispered the man, as he severed the bonds, and the woman rose to her feet.

Like his shadow she followed him without a word, through the midst of the sleeping brigands, until they came near the spot where lay the dead sentinel.

Then their eyes in the early dawn fell upon a sickening sight. A score of mountain wolves were springing upon the dead body of the guard.

Ravenous with hunger, thirsting for a taste of human blood, the mad beasts would not be driven off, and instantly raised a howl of defiance, while they showed their white teeth, and assumed a threatening position, determined not to be easily driven from their prey.

The noise aroused another guard not very far away; he beheld the two forms, and called out to his supposed companion:

"Shoot the durned brutes, Paddy; it'll save the bugler's breath, an' it's about the time to rouse the boys."

But the howling of the wolves, and voice of the sentinel had already aroused the camp, and the man and the woman felt that there was but one course to pursue.

The man acted promptly; a shot from his revolver scattered the snarling brutes; his strong arm encircled the slender waist of his companion, and with the speed of a deer he bounded away.

A shot from the watching sentinel followed him harmlessly; a wild cry of alarm sounded through the camp; a bugle-note pierced the crisp, morning air, and the outlaws were ready for action, believing that they were to be attacked.

Still on sped the fugitives, the man carrying the woman in his strong arms, she perfectly passive in his hands.

Suddenly from the dark shelter of a thicket-covered ravine dashed three horses, one of them bearing a rider.

"Ha! Prairie Wolf, my brother, you are just in time. I have had a hard run of it. Miss Linville, are you strong enough to ride—ha!" and Death Trailer stopped suddenly, as the gray light showed him that she whom he had taken from the outlaw camp was not Kate Linville, but an Indian maiden!

In the darkness neither the man nor the maiden had seen the other's face.

But, though he had not saved Kate Linville, Death Trailer had rescued the Red Lily of the Comanches, who turned her lustrous eyes upon her preserver with such heartfelt thanks that he almost forgot his disappointment, and placing the maiden upon the back of a fleet-looking mustang, he bounded into his own saddle, and the three horses were urged to a run, for, from the dark covert of the timber, a score or more of outlaw horsemen dashed out in full pursuit of the fugitives.

Fully acquainted with the country, Ralph Randolph led the way into the hills, and by dodging through ravines and crossing numerous mountain streams, he eluded his pursuers, whom he saw from a high summit, returning to their camp and giving up the pursuit.

Dismounting to rest their horses, the Red Lily quickly stepped forward, and placing both of her hands upon the broad shoulders of the Post Scout, looked sweetly up into his handsome face, and said softly, in English, tinged with the slightest accent:

"The Red Lily was drooping in the bad pale-face camp, and the great white chief has saved her, and her heart is full of love for him. The Prairie Wolf, the son of the great Moochoo, was sentenced to die, and your brave arm took the life of his foes. The Red Lily and the Prairie Wolf will ever be the friends of the great Death Trailer."

The scout was struck by the manner and words of the young girl, and looked earnestly upon her. He beheld a maiden of perhaps eighteen years of age, and a face of wondrous beauty, while her complexion was a rich red, causing her to look as though both white and Indian blood commingled in her veins.

She was attired in the finest-dressed buckskin, worked with beads, and fitting her faultless, slender form to perfection.

The smallest moccasins covered her shapely feet, and her wealth of dark brown hair encircled her proud head like a coronet, while bands of gold and silver held it in place.

Having finished his admiring glance at the beautiful maiden, the scout replied, quietly:

"I am glad to have saved the Red Lily from drooping and dying far from her people—the Prairie Wolf knows the trail back to the village of your tribe, and Moochoo, the Comanche chief, will welcome his children ere another sun. Now the Death Trailer must follow again the trail of the robbers of the hills, for a lily of the pale-faces is drooping in their wicked hands."

"The Red Lily and Prairie Wolf sorrow for the White Lily of the pale-faces—they will go with the Death Trailer to aid him," said Prairie Wolf, firmly.

"No; they must return to their people; but, will the Red Lily tell the Death Trailer all she knows about the bands of the white robbers?"

"The Red Lily was fishing in the mountain streams, and a party of pale-faces took her prisoner, and bore her swiftly away from her people. When the last sun was hiding behind the prairie grass they met the great chief of the hill robbers, the Bravo of the Rio Grande, coming from the prairie and following a heavy trail leading into the mountains—"

"It was the trail of the other band of outlaws

and their Comanche pursuers. I see all now; the Bravo and his men were so fatigued they had to go into camp, and the three trails in one deceived me, and I struck the encampment of the Bravo, instead of that of his band that had gone on before. Now I can act with my eyes open," mused, rather than said the scout, and then turning to Prairie Wolf, he continued:

"The Death Trailer must be off on the trail. One of these days he may come to the village of your people and see the Prairie Wolf and the Red Lily. He bids them farewell!"

Grasping the hand of the young warrior and his sister, the scout sprung into his saddle and rode away, heading toward the stronghold of the Bravo of the Rio Grande.

CHAPTER VI.

ALONE ON THE TRAIL.

By a short cut through the hills, with which he seemed perfectly familiar, the fort scout entered, toward evening, a large valley, sheltered upon one side by a high and rugged ridge of hills, and overhung upon the other by a lofty range of mountains, towering in plateaus to a considerable height above the lowlands.

Through the valley, which was more like a basin, or bowl, ran a rapid and deep stream of water, which guarded large pastures beneath the mountain-side, upon which were great numbers of cattle and horses feeding upon the rich grass that grew in the river-bottom.

From the mouth of a ravine upon the hillside of the valley Ralph closely scanned the scene in his front, and beheld a guard of perhaps half a dozen outlaws, lazily lolling beneath the trees at the ford, the only place where the river could be crossed without swimming, and which was protected upon the mountain side of the vale by a stockade, pierced with musket-holes.

Far above, on a plateau in the mountains, a dozen columns of smoke curled upward, and there the scout knew was the stronghold of the Bravo of the Rio Grande and his band.

"It is a fearful risk, but I must take it, and God grant I be not too late," muttered the Death-Shot Scout; and, dismounting, he unsaddled Comanche and lariatd him to feed, while he took from his saddle-pockets various closely rolled bundles.

Opening one of the packages, the contents exhibited were a number of paints of different colors, some beads, a belt of scalps, with various-hued hair, and the traps of an Indian warrior.

Another displayed a headgear of feathers, with a mass of long, coarse black hair skillfully arranged in it to serve as a wig, while a third bundle contained the scanty attire of a Comanche chief.

A horse-hair bridle, and blanket-saddle, with raw-hide stirrups was then placed upon Comanche, who seemed to realize that he was being disguised to play some important part.

Then the Death-Shot Scout set to work to make his toilet, and in half an hour he presented the appearance of a Comanche chief, one who would pass muster in the presence of old Moochoo himself.

Having securely cached his saddle, bridle and clothes, Ralph rolled his short repeating rifle and revolvers in his blanket, slung it upon his back, and arming himself with the rude weapons which Prairie Wolf had given him—in exchange for the arms of the two outlaws the scout had slain—he rode boldly forth into the valley and headed for the ford.

He was quickly discovered by the outlaw outpost, who sprung from their recumbent position to one of attention; but as he came alone, wearing a belt of wampun as a sign of peace, he was allowed to approach the stockade unmolested.

"Wal, Injin, I don't recollect yer phiz, so I'll jist ask yer biz," said a rude-looking ruffian grunting an approval at his own wit, while one of his comrades said with a hoarse laugh:

"Durn my eyes, ef yer hain't a poit, Bluster."

"I know I is—I use ter write varses fur my gal, afore I tuk ter the prairie fur plunder; but, Injin, what hev yer cum fur?"

"Me big chief! Me come from the great chief of Comanche, Moochoo; me come for the Red Lily of Comanches," replied the supposed chief, with a perfect imitation of an Indian's manner of speaking.

"What in darnation did yer come here fur? The Red Lily hain't bin here, red-skin."

"The tongue of the pale face is crooked. The robbers of the hill took the Red Lily from her people."

"Bluster, he says you lies," laughed one of the outlaws, while the man addressed replied angrily: "Then, I'll hev his life. Ef I is a liar, I don't want a Injun to diskiver it."

"Hold! Chief, what would you here?" and a

horseman rode up—a mere youth, with a handsome, reckless face, and slender form, attired in a picturesque costume, half Mexican, half army uniform.

At the appearance of the young horseman the men fell back with an air of respect, and to the question put him, the disguised Death Trailer told his errand—that he came from the great chief Moochoo, to negotiate for the release of his daughter, the Red Lily of the Comanches.

"The girl is not here; but she has doubtless been taken by some of our roving bands that will soon be in, so you can wait in the stronghold, chief. Come with me," and the youth, who was an officer of the outlaws, and the commandant of the stronghold in the absence of the Bravo, led the way across the lowlands dotted with the herds of stolen cattle and horses, and struck a steep pathway leading up the mountain to the plateau beyond.

As they rode along Death Trailer's quick eyes took in every advantage and disadvantage of an attack upon the outlaws, and he could not but admire the thorough discipline under which the Bravo Chief held his raiders.

A ride of half a mile, up the narrow path, brought the two to the plateau, a level shelf of land, bordered by trees, and overhung by lofty cliffs, towering far above.

Here dwelt the outlaws, and their rude cabins bordered a small stream, which rushed headlong over the shelf, and fell into the valley below, where it mingled with the river.

Only a few outlaws were visible, which proved that the Bravo had the larger portion of his band away with him upon a raid; but with a joy that flushed his painted face, the scout recognized a white steed that had been ridden by Kate Linville, and near him, on the limb of a tree, hung a lady's saddle and bridle.

Without speaking more with his companion, the young officer led the way into a clump of trees, overhung by the lofty cliff, against the base of which was built a cabin, larger and more comfortable looking than the others.

"Chief, you can lariat your horse yonder, and hang about here until the return of the Bravo; if you come with a wampun belt from Moochoo to him, he will respect it, though he little loves your race. If you need food, ask yonder old negress and she will give it to you."

The disguised scout grunted in reply, and the young officer rode away, going toward another cabin not far away.

Left to himself, Ralph's keen eyes at once roamed over the plateau, up the cliff-side, and about the cabin.

Then he lariatd Comanche, removed his blanket-saddle, and bent his steps toward the cabin.

Suddenly he halted. Not ten steps from him, seated just inside the window, he beheld her whom he believed to be Kate Linville.

Unobserved by the maiden, the scout gazed in admiration upon her. The face was pale and haggard, yet very beautiful, and masses of golden hair were coiled around her head, while her exquisitely molded form was clothed in a dark-blue riding-habit, adorned with brass buttons.

Upon the table near her lay a pair of gauntlet gloves and a broad riding hat.

"The time to act has come—good fortune aid me," and the spy-scout drew near the window.

The maiden suddenly looked up and started back as her eyes fell upon the made-up Indian.

Glancing quickly around the room, the scout saw that the maiden was the only occupant, and then said in a low tone:

"Have no fear—I am not an Indian. Are you Miss Linville?"

The blood rushed over the pale face, the hands were clasped nervously, and a soft, sweet voice answered:

"Yes, I am Kate Linville. Who are you?"

"A post scout in disguise. I came to endeavor to save you, for your father knows of your capture, as it was his detachment, going to meet you, over which the outlaws dashed two nights ago."

"And you have come to save me. It is noble of you to thus risk your life; but I suppose my father and his troopers are near."

"No, your father returned to the fort; there are not troops enough on the border to take this stronghold. I am alone."

"Alone! How can you save me?"

"I will tell you. But first let me ask—is this your room, and when did you reach here?"

"During the past night. Yes, this is the room given me."

"Well, you observe that this cliff rises above the cabin a hundred feet—I will leave the stronghold now, and to-night will come here

after you by way of the cliff, so be watchful, and I will save you. If anything should prevent my coming to-night, to-morrow night I will be here—so keep up a brave heart."

Silently the scout turned away, and after having thoroughly reconnoitered the entire surroundings, he resaddled Comanche, mounted, and unobserved by any one, rode slowly back by the path he had approached the plateau—no, there was one watching him with anxious, hopeful eyes, and as she saw his tall form disappear from view, she bowed her proud head and wept—yet in the strange man, disguised as he was, she felt a perfect confidence, and the hope of escape thrilled her heart with joy.

CHAPTER VII.

A DARING RAID.

HAVING observed that he was left pretty much to himself, to await the coming of the Bravo Chief, the Death-Shot Scout determined, now that he had seen Kate Linville, to at once escape from the stronghold.

In a quiet trot he rode from the stronghold, past the sentinel stationed there, and who having seen him go in with the young officer, believed him a courier, and let him go by without a word.

Descending the steep pathway, he viewed the cattle-dotted low lands, and approached the river, where one of the guards called out, "Well, Injin, did yer find ther gal?"

"The great chief of the pale-faces is away on the war trail of his enemies; me come back when the chief here, for the heart of Moochoo mourns for the Red Lily."

Others addressed the supposed warrior: but without a word of reply he rode on, reached the river, and was safe from immediate danger.

Returning to the ravine where he had cached his saddle and clothing, the Scout lariatd out Comanche, to feed upon the rich grass, and stripping himself of all extra clothing, he rolled his revolvers in an oil-skin, and leaving all else, he walked cautiously toward the river-bank, just as night cast its shadows upon the scene.

Going to a point half a mile above the ford, he plunged boldly in and swam with strong strokes toward the other shore.

He was a skillful and strong swimmer, and soon reached the other bank, where he lay quietly for a few moments.

Then he wormed himself over the meadow in the direction of a herd of mustangs, among which he had noticed in the afternoon several excellent horses.

Without much difficulty he approached the drove, and after a careful search selected one of the animals, which he deemed the very pick of all for speed and endurance, and which allowed him to catch him without any difficulty, anxious to leave such company as he was then in, for the steed had doubtless led an honest life before becoming the charger of an outlaw.

As though the horse was quietly feeding, the scout allowed him to approach the river-bank, for he knew the eye of the sentinel on the hill commanded the drove, and also felt certain that the guard at the ford kept a close watch upon their cattle, as well as closely watched the river, fearing that some prowling Indian might be bold enough to venture across in the hope of escaping with a good steed.

As if to aid the scout, the drove gradually followed toward the river, seeing which one of the guards mounted quickly, and rode forward to drive them back toward the hills.

There was a new moon, and by its light Randolph plainly saw his foe approaching. He knew he could easily escape detection by going back with the mustangs; but then he would have to again approach the river, and if only with the horse he had selected, he knew discovery was certain, so he determined to act at once, for, to make the circuit and gain the hills above the stronghold he had no time to lose.

Holding his steed perfectly quiet, while the others dashed away, as the horseman rode toward them with a yell, he waited until the guard dashed up to him, crying out: "What ails yer, yer stubborn brute?"

Suddenly the dark form of the scout darted out from the other side of the horse, and an iron grasp was on the rein of the guard, a revolver pointed at his breast.

"One cry and you are a dead man," said the stern voice of the Death-Shot Scout, but, doubtless unnerved by surprise and fear the outlaw yelled out:

"Come, fellers! for God's sake help me."

They were his last words, for a flash and report came, and the outlaw fell dead from his saddle, while his steed ran wildly across the prairie. There was no time to lose now, for the alarm.

was given, the guards answered the cry of their comrade, and a shot of warning was fired by the sentinel on the hill.

Springing upon the horse, the Death-Shot Scout dashed swiftly toward the river; but only a dozen bounds had he taken when there were four horsemen in hot pursuit.

Reaching the precipitous river-bank, fully ten feet in height, the scout drew rein suddenly, and once, twice, thrice, his dreaded revolver rung out, and an outlaw and a steed went down.

Then the gallant animal was urged over the steep bank and descended into the river with a heavy plunge, sinking momentarily beneath the surface, but rising, he swam boldly for the other shore.

Though momentarily checked by the fire of the scout, the guards soon rallied and rushed up to the river-bank.

Far out upon the water they beheld the swimming steed and rider, and at once opened upon them with their rifles.

But the scout turned half round on his steed, and with ringing cracks his revolver flashed out its six shots, and drove the enemy in confusion from the bank.

When next they ventured to look for their enemy, he had gained the other shore.

A rapid ride brought him to the ravine, and at a small stream of water he quickly washed off his paint, and was once more himself.

Ten minutes more and he was mounted on Comanche, and leading his new capture, which indeed was a splendid animal, he rode swiftly up the river.

A gallop of five miles brought him to the head of the valley, and here he knew there must be another outlaw guard; but without discovery by them, although he saw the dark forms of horsemen in the distance, he again crossed the river, and headed for the lofty range, under the shades of the foot-hills.

It was a long and hard climb up the steep mountain-side, but Randolph dismounted, and led his horses, and three hours after leaving the valley he gained the point he sought, the summit of the range with the outlaw stronghold below him, and the ridge sloping down to the prairie upon the other side.

Finding a safe retreat for his horses, and where there was both grass and water, the scout then sought out a pathway down toward the prairie, and after some difficulty discovered a way that was passable.

Then he returned to the summit of the range, and stood upon the cliff above the cabin of the Bravo Chief.

One hundred feet below him he knew Kate Linville was anxiously watching for his coming.

One hundred feet below him was the plateau where was the stronghold of the outlaws, and where slumbered scores of his bitterest foes.

It was now after midnight, and the moon, in its first quarter, had gone down below the prairie horizon; but yet the stars shone brightly down, and by their light he beheld a long line of horsemen file up the steep path and divide upon the plateau, all of them, excepting two, going toward the distant cabins of the band.

Those two came toward the cabin of the chief and dismounted and entered, while a man led their horses away.

"Now I must act, for the Bravo has returned to his mountain den, and Kate Linville is in the serpent's power. Well, if I lose my life I shall make the attempt to save her, though the chances against success are fearful," and the scout turned away from the cliff to prepare for his desperate errand.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DANGERS DEEPEN.

THE preparations of the Death-Shot Scout were soon made. By attaching the end of his lariat to a stout tree, growing upon the cliff, and making his lasso secure to this he dropped it over the rocky ledge, placing his blanket upon the rock to prevent the rope from wearing.

Divesting himself of everything that would hinder his movements, but with his knife and revolvers in his belt, the scout then lowered himself over the cliff, and after a cautious descent, found himself upon the plateau, his lasso reaching within four feet of the ground, fortunately for him.

Around him all was as silent as the grave, and seeing no lights in the cabin, he concluded that the Bravo had doubtless retired, worn out after his long and arduous trip.

Here and there in the quarters of the band a light glimmered, showing that an outlaw was still up, perhaps relating the incidents of the expedition to those who had remained behind,

or, maybe, unable to sleep, for fear of the grim specters that haunted his slumbers, and which the darkness was certain to call up from their graves.

"I will first have all in readiness, so that there will be no detention. I hate to cross the opening, for the Bravo may keep a guard upon his balcony at night," said the scout, hesitatingly.

But after a pause of a few moments, he skulked out from the shadow of the cliff, and sought the timber, where he had seen the side-saddle of Kate Linville, and the steed she had ridden.

Arriving there he found other horses in the wood, doubtless the animals ridden by the outlaws just returned.

But he found the saddle, and lifted it from the limb, and leaned over to search around the trunk of the tree for the bridle, when his hand suddenly swept across the face of a human being.

There was a half-stifled cry of fright, but it was choked back by the iron grasp of the scout upon the throat, and the body writhed fearfully as the keen blade of the Death Trapper was forced to the hilt into the heart of the struggler.

"My God! this is terrible! But my life and her honor demand that I shrink not now; the die is cast, and I cannot hesitate!" and with a shudder the Scout continued his search for the bridle, which he soon found, and returned cautiously toward the cliff.

Reaching the lasso, he attached the equipments he had won by taking the life of a human being to the end, and with wonderful muscular strength ascended the slender line to the top.

The lasso was then drawn cautiously up, and a quarter of an hour after saw Comanche and his captured companion saddled and bridled for the hard journey before them.

Again the scout returned to the cliff, and descended to the plateau, and his breathing was suppressed, his teeth firm set, for the greater danger of all had come.

The window, where he had seen and talked with Kate Linville was open, and he approached it cautiously, and hesitated before it.

Perhaps there was a guard over her; or it might be, the old negress slept in her room.

The latter was the more likely, as escape was impossible it would seem from that outlaw stronghold—from the very cabin of the Bravo Chief.

A low whistle trembled on the scout's lips, and a movement was heard within the dark room.

Was it a guard on the alert, or the old negress awakened.

Again the whistle was repeated, and had the form of a guard, or the negress appeared at the window, their life would have been in deadly peril.

Then came a light step, and even in the darkness, the scout beheld the fairy form of Kate Linville.

"Miss Linville, I have come to save you," was the low whisper, and in her joy the maiden clutched at the window for support, for she trembled from head to foot.

"Calm yourself, lady, for all depends upon coolness and nerve. We are in the midst of deadly danger," and the scout's voice was firm and assuring, and its tone nerved the young girl to bravery.

"Wait; I will be with you in a moment," she said, softly, and in five minutes more she was again at the window.

Raising her like a child in his powerful arms, the scout took her from the window, and bore her quickly beneath the deep shadow of the cliff.

"Here, Miss Linville, take a drink of this; it will revive and nerve you," and the scout handed her a flask of brandy, a swallow of which Kate willingly took, for her strength was almost failing her from dread of detection.

"I am sorry that I have not better conveniences for your escape, Miss Linville, but I could not be particular under the circumstances. You see, I will have to make this lasso fast around your waist, and you will have to steady yourself with your hands as I draw you up the cliffside."

The scout spoke almost cheerfully, yet Kate shuddered at the thought of being left alone; but she knew it could not be helped, and nerved herself to the task.

The hands of Death Trapper were upon the lasso to ascend, when there came a low growl, followed by a loud bark.

In an instant he had hurled himself upon the huge dog, and a short, terrific struggle followed, which ended in the death of the brute, but not

until his howls had rung out loud in alarm and pain.

"For God's sake keep calm, Miss Linville; you shall be soon out of danger—be brave," and the scout went up the lasso hand-over-hand with a speed one would hardly believe possible.

Kate Linville stood like a frightened deer, trembling from head to foot, while a loud, commanding voice rung out from within the cabin, and was answered by hurrying feet.

Yet the lasso swayed violently, showing that the scout was still ascending, and the frightened maiden believed all was lost; but as a light flashed from the cabin door, and a form stepped forth into the darkness, Kate Linville felt the lasso tighten, and the next instant she was raised from the ground.

Determined to be worthy of one who had risked life to save her, Kate held firmly on with one hand, while with the other, she steadied herself against the side of the cliff.

Rapidly she ascended through the darkness, her mind full of fears that she might be discovered and fired upon, or that the lasso might give way, for it seemed strangely slender to her grasp.

Yet up, up she went, her eyes watching the form of the man who had come from the cabin, light in hand, and she beheld him stoop over the slain dog.

Then followed his loud cry of alarm; more lights appeared in the large cabin, angry voices were heard, and Kate Linville saw no more—she was in the arms of the bold scout. Then her courage failed her and she fainted away.

Quickly Death Trapper bore his fair companion to the mountain spring near where he had left the horses, and then ran back to secure his lasso, after which he returned, and set himself to revive the maiden, at the same time fearful that the dangers and fatigues she had gone through since her capture by the outlaws, would cause her to be seriously ill.

But his fears were groundless, for Kate soon returned to consciousness, and in a few moments more was mounted upon the captured steed, following the scout down the steep mountain-side, while behind them were heard alarm and confusion in the outlaw stronghold, for they had discovered the escape of their prisoner.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRAVO CHIEF.

As the scout had surmised, the horsemen whom he had seen enter the stronghold while he was watching on the cliff, were the immediate followers of the Bravo Chief, with their daring leader at their head, accompanied by the young officer who conducted Death Trapper into the stronghold, and who had gone to meet his chief, when a runner arrived with news that he was coming.

A few moments sufficed to place the Bravo in possession of all that had transpired at the stronghold since his departure; then the youthful officer sought his room and retired, leaving his chief strangely gloomy and stern.

No wonder that the brow of the Bravo was dark and threatening, for of late severe reverses had overtaken him, and he mused moodily upon the past, as he sat alone in the darkness of his chamber, his eyes gazing through the open window that commanded a view of the plateau, with the cabins of his men in the distance.

"Ill luck has dogged me persistently of late, and I fear I shall have trouble with the men tomorrow, for they were mutinous before these last disasters," he muttered; after a while he continued: "I certainly thought that one of my three columns sent out would be successful; but, what is the result? Why, my own party were most successful, and although we lost heavily in cut-throats, we gained a large amount of plunder, which that cursed prairie fire tore from us; ay, and liked to have gotten all of us, too. Then we lost that dare-devil scout, by his magnificent leap across the gulch, and broken down by our hard jaunt, we were delayed for two days, to feel happy when we met our scouts with the Red Lily of the Comanches a prisoner, and I believed I could get my own terms with old Moochoo, if I did not decide to keep his pretty daughter for my own cage. But, curses on that Death Trapper! He snatched my prize from my very grasp. I know that it was the scout, for none other would have dared what he did, and besides, we all heard his war-cry of defiance."

"But why is he aiding the escape of the Red Lily? The Comanches are his worst enemies, and— No, I cannot account for it. Then I came home to find that old Moochoo had sent one of his warriors to me to treat for the release of his daughter, and Halford allows the Indian

to coolly ride out of the stronghold, having doubtless only wanted to see how strong we were, and an attack from the whole Comanche tribe will be the next thing; and they cannot think that we keep close watch, when, Halford says, an Indian swam the river and escaped with a stolen horse, the best of the drove. But that fellow had revolvers, and used them, too, with deadly effect, so it could not have been an Indian. By Heaven! I'll wager my soul against Satan's dominions, that it was that scout, Death Trailer! Yes, he was the horse-thief, and he is hanging around here for no good. Ha! I have it. My two other columns of raiders have returned, one empty-handed, and the other bringing with them a white maiden as captive. They captured her on the trail to the fort—doubtless the wife or daughter of some of the officers stationed there. And that will get us into more trouble, for they shot down her escort—this was wrong in Lieutenant Rafael, but then he is a Mexican, and never misses a chance to take the life of an American soldier—curse him! The military will yet make it too hot for me, if I war against them in this style. Well, I have one crumb of comfort: if they do not pay well for the return of the girl, she will serve to relieve the monotony of my life at home, for I get strangely moody of late when not on the war-path. Halford says she is very beautiful—well, I'll see for myself in the morning. Ha! what noise is that? That dog never raises his voice like that unless there is danger about. Halford! Halford! see what the row is outside," and the voice of the Bravo chief rung out clear and loud, while his lieutenant, sleeping in an adjoining room, sprung to his feet, quickly lighted a lantern, and went forth into the darkness.

His cry of alarm, when he discovered the dog, with a knife thrust in his side, roused the cabin household of the Bravo Chief, consisting of the old negress, and two guards, who slept upon the front piazza.

Seizing a bugle, the chief blew the signal of alarm, for he felt that there had been some mischief going on under cover of the darkness, and which he was determined to discover.

In squads of four or five the outlaws rallied to the bugle call, and one party reported finding the dead body of the guard over the horses, and the excitement increased, while torches were lighted and a thorough search was made of the entire plateau.

But nothing else of a suspicious nature was discovered, and the report from the sentinel, and the guards at the fort was that nothing had been seen by them.

Suddenly the chief remembered his fair prisoner, and he rushed to her room and knocked loudly.

No response came, and with one dash of his foot broke in the bolted door.

The room was vacant and a curse of rage broke from his lips, while all seemed to be awestricken with surprise, for that any one could escape from the stronghold, especially a woman, no one believed.

"By Heaven! it is plain now:—the Death Trailer's dogging our steps has ended in this and no other man could do it."

Glancing around the room the eyes of the chief fell upon a small embroidered pocket, such as are worn to a lady's belt.

He sprung forward and took it from the floor. It was delicately worked, scented, and attached to a silver chain.

Hastily opening it, he beheld a pocket-handkerchief, and a letter, addressed to Miss Kate Linville.

The Bravo Chief read the superscription, and his face turned as pale as death, while his lips grew white and stern.

"Kate Linville! She in my very home! How strange! But it may not be too late. I may recapture her! If not, I will gain possession of her if it costs me half my band. Halford?"

"Sir," and the young officer stepped forward. "Have the men ready to start at daylight. I will take all that can be spared from the stronghold," and the Bravo Chief re-entered his own room, still clutching tightly in his hand the letter and the pocket, and with his face growing momentarily more stern and determined.

CHAPTER X.

A REBELLION.

WITH the first peep of day the outlaw stronghold was a scene of wild excitement. It was evident that other causes than the escape of the fair prisoner, and being ordered ready for the trail, had stirred up the band to such a pitch of confusion.

As the light increased the Bravo Chief came out upon his piazza, his brow dark and threatening, his face pale and stern, for it was evident that the mutterings of a coming storm had reached his ears.

"Men, I summoned you here to start upon the trail, not to show ill spirit at the reverses we have lately met with," and the chief confronted the angry crowd, while his eyes blazed brightly.

"It's well enough to talk, chief; but you ain't done us no good o' late, and besides has got us cut up terrible, an' ef it's the same to yerself, we'd jist like to have yer git, an' let the young lieutenant be' our leader," and the bold spokesman advanced from the crowd and stood in front of the Bravo, around whom the officers of the stronghold, and several of the men, were gathering, for they felt that trouble was brewing.

"Do I understand you aright, my man—you wish me to turn the command of the band over to my young lieutenant? Is this the wish of you all?" and the eagle eye of the chief swept over the crowd.

"It am, chief," and the same speaker again was the spokesman.

"Well, now hear me—I saved the lives of many of you, when condemned to death by the Mexican Government, and well you know that I organized this band, and when driven from the lower Rio Grande came hither and established this stronghold, from which neither the settlers, soldiers or Comanches have been able to drive me. Of late, reverses have befallen us, which were the fault of circumstances and not myself, and yet if you have suffered, I have suffered with you, and no man in this band has exposed his life more willingly than I. Now, let me say that I rule here, and Heaven have mercy on the poor wretch who disputes my authority, or arouses my anger. Men, will you still have faith in your chief?" and the clear, fearless eyes of the Bravo glanced over the crowd.

Instantly there was a cheer from one man, and another voice cried:

"Hurrah for the Bravo Chief!"

A hundred voices echoed the cry, and the bold spokesman suddenly found himself deserted by nearly all who had thrust the honor of the position upon him; but, glancing around him, he beheld perhaps a score willing to stand by him, and believing that the death of the chief would bring back the deserting mutineers, he sprung forward, crying:

"Down with him, fellers—he would sell us to the sogers, ef he could git half a chance."

The eyes of the Bravo Chief now blazed fire, and his muscles grew hard as iron, while every nerve seemed strung to its finest tension.

Yet in a calm, deep voice, he said:

"Back, you traitorous hound! Back, I say!"

But the mutineer rushed on, and had reached the steps leading upon the piazza, followed by the score whom he felt he could rely upon, and a number of those who had a moment before cheered for their chief.

As the savage leader of the mutineers sprung upon the piazza, the chief rushed forward to meet him, there was a clash of steel as their knives met, and then the keen blade of the Bravo was buried to the hilt in the heart of his assailant.

Seizing the body in his strong arms, he hurled it upon those who were still pressing on, and then springing quickly back, a revolver in either hand, the weapons flashed rapidly forth, and their deadly music was the knell to several hardy ruffians, whose bodies blockaded the steps.

The sudden and fearless action of the Bravo changed the attitude of affairs in a marked degree, for the rebellion was terminated in an instant, and those who a moment before would have been glad to see the chief slain, were now loudest in their cheering for him.

"Take these dead off and bury them, and remember henceforth that I rule here, even if you are a set of cut-throats. Now, back to your cabins, and await my orders."

With a glance over his men, the Bravo Chief turned about and entered his cabin, motioning to his officers to follow him.

"Halford, I wish twenty of the best men in the band to accompany me—let them be mounted on the best horses in the stronghold, and thoroughly armed. I wish them within the hour, and while I am gone keep a tight rein upon these devils, for they seem inclined to kick in the traces. And, gentlemen, I warn you all, to keep your eyes open, for old Moochoo and his warriors may pay you a visit at any time."

Seeing that their chief had no more to say the several outlaw officers retired, and the Bravo was again alone.

Slowly he paced the room, as if in painful thought, and then he murmured:

"Would that I were all that she once believed me to be—but why repine now over the past—it is a blood-stained, sin-blotted record that can never be wiped out. But I will seek her—I will make her trust and believe me, and—bring her to my outlaw home. Yes, my beautiful Kate, you and I have not said farewell forever yet—we will meet again, and ere three suns have risen and set. Yes, I'll dare it, for if I lose my life, I can die but once."

As if having fully determined upon his course, the Bravo Chief made a few preparations, and, in half an hour more, rode from the stronghold at the head of a score of his most trusty followers, who felt that their leader was bound upon some errand of desperate danger, for never had they seen his face so dark and stern.

CHAPTER XI.

FLYING FOR LIFE.

WHEN the scout and his fair companion had once escaped the immediate danger threatening them, they were soon pursuing their way rapidly away from the outlaw stronghold, Death Trailer seeming intuitively to take the best route in the darkness.

Knowing that his having crossed the ridge of mountains would necessitate a much wider circuit to reach the outpost, and not fearing that his means of escape would be discovered before morning, if then, Death Trailer determined to spare the horses as much as was in his power, and consequently never urged them out of an easy gait.

At daylight he halted for a rest and breakfast, and then for the first time Kate Linville really beheld her brave preserver, and she could not but feel a thrill of admiration for the splendid-looking man who had so daringly come to her rescue, and, unaided, taken her from the power of her cruel captors.

After a short stop, and a hearty breakfast of jerked buffalo meat, crackers and coffee, for the scout was always well supplied with edibles, the two fugitives mounted and pursued their way, the maiden in the highest spirits at her escape, and seeming to feel perfect confidence in her companion to protect her.

Then, in a voice and manner wholly free from the border dialect and style, the scout told her of her father having started to meet her, of the charge of the outlaws upon their camp, and then of the rush of the Comanches in pursuit, their object being the rescue of the Red Lily, whom they believed to be in the power of the Bravo Chief.

Of the severe handling of the soldiers by the outlaws and Comanches, he said nothing, excepting that they had doubtless returned to camp for reinforcements, as soon as Colonel Linville discovered that she was a prisoner to the renegades.

Then he went on to relate of his following the trail, his meeting in the mountains with the young chief, Prairie Wolf, who alone had started forth to rescue his sister, and then of the rescue of the Red Lily under the impression that it was herself.

Of his means used to get into the stronghold, and of his narrow escape with the steed she rode, he also told her, but in a manner wholly free from egotism and self-praise; yet Kate Linville felt that her preserver was a truly wonderful man, and the more she listened to his soft, pleasant voice—the more she saw of his handsome, daring face, the more she was impressed with him, while her heart gave one long-drawn sigh. Why she sighed, as if with sorrow, the sequel will show.

Through the long hours of the day, and late the following night, the two pressed on, neither seeing or hearing anything of an alarming nature.

At a late hour of the night the scout encamped among the foot-hills, that overlooked the prairie for miles and miles in their front.

Having seen to the comfort of his fair charge, who was soon fast asleep, the scout attended faithfully to the two steeds, and then after a short circuit of the camp he threw himself down to rest.

With the first peep of day he awoke, and at once set to work preparing their frugal breakfast, which, when ready, he called Kate to partake of, and the two were soon discussing the edibles with a relish which constant exercise and the fresh morning air could alone give.

But, suddenly, the scout arose to his feet, and then threw himself flat upon the ground in a listening attitude.

"Is there danger?" asked Kate, softly.

"I hear hoof-strokes; but, they are yet some

distance away; still, we had better get ready to ride," cautiously replied the scout.

The maiden glanced earnestly into his face, to see if she could read there more than he would tell; but, she might as well have gazed upon a face of stone; there was no sign of trouble, fear or doubt, resting there—it was calm, pleasant and fearless.

In a few moments the horses, greatly refreshed by their rest and feed, were ready, and Kate was raised to her saddle, while the scout was preparing to mount.

Then came the sound of rapidly running steeds, and out of a thicket several hundred yards away dashed several horsemen.

At a glance Death Trailer recognized his foes, and, as quick as lightning, his repeating rifle was thrown across his saddle, and three shots rung out in quick succession, bringing down a steed and a rider, while the others quickly drew rein.

"The bounds are upon us, Miss Linville, but we have fleet steeds and can easily run away from them," he said calmly.

As he spoke, however, there came a volley from the outlaws, and with a mad bound into the air, a half-human cry, the steed ridden by Kate Linville fell dead.

But the strong arm of the scout caught the maiden, and freed her from the animal, and then he drew her quickly over the ridge, while again his rifle rung out its death-knell, and again the outlaws were checked by his deadly fire.

Rapidly reloading the weapon, Death Trailer seemed to be thinking at the same time, for as the rifle was once more ready, he turned to Kate, and said firmly:

"Miss Linville, as you are dismounted there is but one plan to pursue—"

"And that is—" said the maiden, calmly, though a great dread clutched at her heart.

The scout made no reply; but springing forward, unhurt by a few scattering shots, he quickly took the side-saddle from the fallen steed, and placed it upon Comanche, while he tied his own saddle on behind.

"What is your object?" asked Kate, seeing his act.

The scout glanced quickly toward the thicket, raised his rifle and fired several times in quick succession, and said quietly:

"I will tell you—Comanche could not keep ahead of yonder horses carrying double weight; but with you only, no steed on the prairie can catch him—see! afar off yonder, where the prairie meets the horizon, you observe a dark object, do you not?"

"Yes, there!"

"That is it—yonder clump of trees shelters your father's fort, and thither you must at once go."

"And you?"

"I will remain to keep those fiends back from your trail as long as I can—"

"And then be murdered to save me. No, sir; I will not desert you."

"Miss Linville, it is noble of you, but you must; if you remain, I will be killed and you captured. Mounted on Comanche, and steering for yonder clump of trees, you will in four hours be safe, while alone, and on foot, I can defy the outlaws to catch me in these hills, every foot of which I know. Now let me place you in your saddle—ride at a rapid pace, but do not urge Comanche, unless pursued, for it is a long jaunt. Keep your eye on yonder dark object on the horizon, and do not lose your bearings. Tell your father that I will soon be in camp. Now, farewell, and may God protect you!"

The scout had spoken rapidly and earnestly, for his quick eye had discovered that their position was being flanked.

Quickly Kate Linville held forth her hand, and as the scout grasped it, a tear fell from her beautiful eyes, her lips parted, and she murmured:

"You are a noble man, and I feel that you will escape your enemies. Good-by."

A moment more and she was gone, Comanche springing away as though he fully understood the duty devolving upon him, and had no fear regarding the power of his master to take care of himself.

After a short ride down the hillside the prairie was reached, and Kate turned in the direction of the fort, for she could not see the trees from the lowlands.

With a swift gallop she started out over the prairie, and then behind her came one loud, piercing war-cry of defiance, followed by the well-known crack of the scout's rifle, and a rapid firing from his foes, whose shouts filled her heart with terror.

Glancing behind her she beheld a dozen horse-

men dash up to the spot which she had left ten minutes before, and she reeled in her saddle at the thought that Death Trailer had fallen.

But, suddenly, further along the ridge came the crack of a rifle, and she recognized the tall form of Death Trailer, and she waved her hand in adieu.

But at that instant she saw half a dozen men spring from a thicket and rush upon the brave man, whose revolvers rattled forth in a manner she would have appreciated under less dangerous circumstances; but suddenly she had her own danger brought vividly before her, for a number of horsemen had gained the prairie, and were rushing on in full pursuit of her.

With a prayer upon her lips for the scout and herself, she gave Comanche the rein, and away sped the fleet steed across the prairie, his pursuers crowding hotly behind him.

CHAPTER XII.

TO THE RESCUE!

WHEN Colonel Linville found his command so thoroughly wasted by the double attack of outlaws and Comanches, he felt that his first duty was to his dead and wounded, although he had seen his beloved daughter in the power of the cruel renegades, who he feared would not hesitate at any crime.

Having buried his dead, and cared for the wounded, the small party of troopers moved slowly back toward the fort, their hearts hopeful that the maiden might yet be rescued, for, unable to find any trace of the Death Trailer, or his steed, they believed that he was on the trail of the outlaws, and they knew him to be worth, on an expedition of that kind, at least half a hundred soldiers.

At length the fort was reached, and Colonel Linville at once gave orders to have two-thirds of his troopers ready to start at once on the trail of the outlaws, determined to follow them to their very stronghold and give them battle.

But here a sad disappointment met him, for in his absence, calls had come from the settlements for troops to protect them, and the officer in command, where Colonel Linville was away, had sent off nearly all the available force at the outpost.

In despair the sorrowing father knew not what to do, and with anguish at his heart, he paced the floor of his quarters by day and night, for he felt his total inability to act without a large number of men at his back, and to go into the hills after the outlaws with a score of troopers would be willful murder, and gain no good results.

But then a ray of hope came to the fond parent's heart, for an Indian scout came in and reported having seen Death Trailer far up toward the hills, trailing the outlaw and Comanche bands.

He had seen the flying horsemen, and had lain down upon the prairie to conceal himself, and while thus hidden, afar off on the prairie he discovered a single horseman, whom he recognized as the scout.

From his position between the two bands and the Death Trailer, the Indian felt that the scout was watching both bands, unseen himself.

"Well, if man can save poor Kate, Ralph Randolph can, and I feel in better spirits now," and Colonel Linville for the first time took rest and food since the capture of his daughter.

Thus time passed away until toward noon of the fourth day, the sentinel on duty called out suddenly for the corporal of the guard.

That worthy instantly presented himself, and in five minutes more Colonel Linville and several officers stood in the log tower, used as a lookout, and all were gazing earnestly out upon the prairie.

"That is Death Trailer's Comanche. I know his loping run when he is hard driven," said an old scout.

"Yes, and he is pursued," cried the colonel, as above a roll in the prairie appeared half a dozen horsemen, half a mile behind the single steed.

"To horse! to horse!" rung out the colonel's voice, and a score of troopers were ready for the chase.

"It is not the Death Trailer—it is a woman!" called out the old scout, and quickly the glass of Colonel Linville was turned upon the coming steed, for the others had drawn rein and retired behind the roll in the prairie.

"By Heaven! it is my daughter!"

Then down the steep steps sprang the colonel, and calling to a trooper to dismount, he threw himself into his saddle, and was the next instant dashing across the prairie, followed by his men at a rapid pace.

Nearer and nearer drew the hard-pressed steed, and then it was evident to the weakest

vision that he carried a woman, and not a man, upon his back.

Nearer and nearer, until a glad shout of joy burst from the old soldier's lips, a cry of joy from the warden, and father and daughter were in each other's arms, in one long, fond embrace.

"Kate, my darling child, you are not lost then, to your old father."

"No, father, I am safe with you again—but, oh! after so much hardship and danger. Yet, father, I owe all to one whom I know only as a scout—to Death Trailer, he says he is called."

"To Death Trailer, the best guide, scout, hunter and fighter on these plains—the best horseman, the best shot, and most deadly hand with a knife to be found anywhere. To Ralph Randolph, you owe your escape; I felt it, I hoped it would be so—thank God! thank God!" and the old colonel was almost overcome with emotion, and enthusiasm for his gallant scout.

"But father, I fear I have found safety at the cost of the life of Mr. Randolph," and Kate went on to give her father an account of her escape, as they rode slowly toward the fort, while a young officer and the troopers went in pursuit of the pursuers of the maiden.

In thrilling tones she told of the scout's daring entrance into the outlaw stronghold, of his escape with her, and then of the attack upon them, the killing of her horse, and her flight and hard ride toward the outpost, closely pursued by her enemies.

"I could have distanced them, sir; but did not wish to press poor Comanche too hard, so only kept out of range of their bullets, for they fired on me several times, I suppose to wound my horse. 'Yet, father, I fear evil has befallen my brave preserver, for the last I saw of him he was at close quarters, using his revolvers upon half a dozen men who were rushing upon him. 'Can not something be done to find out?'"

"Indeed there can. At present I am crippled in men, for two-thirds of my command are away; but I expect them back daily, and when they come I will move against this Bravo Chief, and bitter shall be my revenge against him. Yet, Kate, I have hopes that Randolph has escaped, for he seems ever to get out of the most desperate scrapes; but come, here we are, and this is to be your future home until you tire of your old father, and some gay gallant makes you his bride."

Kate Linville's face did not flush, as one would have expected, at the allusion to a beau, but turned deadly pale, while she quickly said, and with a deep tremor in her voice:

"Father, I shall ever be happy here. Your home is my home, and I will never care to leave you."

The old soldier drew his daughter toward him and ushered her into his comfortable quarters, while he called out for some one to look to the care of brave Comanche, who had nobly saved Kate Linville from again falling into the hands of the cruel Bravo Chief; also he ordered his aide to see that several of the best scouts were at once sent forth to see if they could find any trace of Death Trailer's fate.

As the scouts rode from the stockade, the troopers returned, unable to overtake the outlaws who had pursued Kate, and unwilling to continue on after them too far from the fort, with the limited force that had been left there.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

SEVERAL days passed away at the fort, the father and daughter happy in being together, yet gloomy at the thought that harm had befallen the brave scout, in whom Colonel Linville seemed to feel the deepest interest, and Kate an anxiety equal to what she would have felt for the fate of a brother.

The squadrons of troopers, sent to aid the settlements, still remained absent, and the scouts sent to look for the trail of the Death Trailer, yet were away, so that Colonel Linville felt that his hands were tied for the present; but he vowed either to rescue the scout, if a prisoner, or to fearfully avenge him, if dead.

One evening, at a late hour, the corporal of the guard was again summoned quickly by the sentinel, who descried far off on the prairie two horsemen flying for their lives before a large party following them.

Instantly orders were given to start a detachment of cavalry to their rescue, while all in the fort crowded the stockade wall and gazed upon pursuers and pursued.

At first it was believed that the two horsemen in front were some of the scouts who had been sent to look up Death Trailer; but a closer inspection proved that one was not a borderman,

as his attire and equipment were of a different kind.

Yet his companion was attired in buckskin and was doubtless a guide.

"Whoever they are they show nerve—Bravo!"

The exclamation of Colonel Linville was caused by seeing the best mounted horseman suddenly draw rein, raise his rifle and fire, while one of the pursuers fell from the saddle.

Then again they set off in full flight, while their enemies came to a halt, and seeing the cavalry dash out of the stockade, turned about and sped away at a rapid run.

While the two fugitives came on toward the stockade, at a more leisurely pace, the troopers continued on after their pursuers, though it was evident that darkness would soon hide them from view.

Just at twilight the two men rode into the fort, cool and thoroughly undisturbed by the hard chase which they had just had for their lives.

Riding up to the colonel's quarters one of the horsemen dismounted, and bowed politely, while the old officer advanced to meet him.

He was a man of striking appearance in face and form, for the latter was tall, slender, graceful, and yet indicative of great strength and endurance; the former was possessed of almost feminine beauty, for the eyes were large, lustrous, and restless, while every feature seemed perfectly molded.

It was a face that some would love, some would fear, and all admire.

Darkly bronzed by exposure to the warm sun, and with gold-brown hair, and long, silken mustache of the same hue, while his attire was a corduroy hunting-suit, with cavalry boots and sombrero, he certainly could not but elicit admiration from Colonel Linville, who most warmly welcomed him, saying in his frank tones:

"You made a gallant charge upon us, sir; but you are welcome."

"Thank you, sir. Do I address Colonel Linville?" said the stranger in an easy manner.

"You do, sir, and you are—"

"This letter will explain."

Colonel Linville said abruptly.

"Be seated, pray," and he broke the seal.

It was from an old army friend, one who had been in command in New Mexico, but who had been lately promoted and ordered North.

It read:

"SANTA FE, June 10.

"MY DEAR LINVILLE:—

"The bearer, Mr. Rodney Radcliffe, is my particular friend and as he visits your territory I give him a few lines to you. Mr. Radcliffe comes of good stock, is a young man of wealth, and his father being largely interested in the Santa Fe trade, his son has come to the Southwest to superintend the business, and at the same time enjoy wild life on the plains."

Seeing that the remainder of the letter referred to other matters, Colonel Linville said, pleasantly:

"Mr. Radcliffe, I am delighted to know you, sir. The hospitalities of my frontier home are at your service. Come, you must be fatigued, so I will show you your room. This is your guide, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; he has been with me ever since I have been in the Southwest."

"He shall be well looked after," and the hospitable old colonel showed his guest into a comfortable room, and then departed to attend to duties devolving upon him about the fort.

Making a hasty toilet, Rodney Radcliffe went into the little parlor of the cabin, to behold at the open window, gazing dreamily forth upon the river, darkening under the approach of night, Kate Linville.

The eyes of the two met, and with a sudden cry, the maiden sprung to her feet, her face as pale as death.

"Rodney Radcliffe! You here?"

"Yes, Kate, I am here. Do you wonder that I have come to seek you?" said the man, in soft, earnest tones.

"I had hoped that we would never meet again—that our paths had forever divided in life."

"Yet it was not to be so; we meet again, and—"

"And what, Mr. Radcliffe?"

"I was going to say that I hoped we would not have to part again."

"Your hope is vain, sir. We can never be more to each other than we are now. The past, with its bitter memories to me, I ignore; let them rest as they are. You are here as my father's guest, and I will be happy to treat you as such. Nay, more, I will tell my father that we have met before—that I knew you when I

was a young and very foolish school-girl; but, though we may appear as friends to others, you and I, Rodney Radcliffe, will understand that even friends we can never be."

"Is this your decision, Kate?"

"I am Miss Linville to you, as to others, Mr. Radcliffe."

"Is this your decision, Miss Linville?"

"It is."

"Very well; I will abide by it. But here comes your father. Ah! colonel, in your fair daughter I find an old friend—a schoolmate of my pet sister, Florence."

"Indeed! I am glad to know it, for you will be company to each other in this lonely outpost, as long as you will honor us with your society, Mr. Radcliffe; but come, supper is on the table, and I doubt not but that your chase has given you a good appetite; yet I am sorry to say that my troopers have returned, unable to come up with your pursuers," and the colonel led the way in to the supper-table, while Kate tried hard to stop the tremor of her lip, and call back the color to her face, blanched by some dread memory of the past, which the sight of her father's guest had recalled.

As for Rodney Radcliffe, he was wholly at his ease, talked well, was witty, and the colonel voted him too good a fellow to be out of the army.

CHAPTER XIV.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

THE position in which Kate Linville last saw Death Trailer, was indeed a most perilous one, for he had bounded away along the ridge, as soon as he saw the maiden out of danger, and had run full upon a small party sent to flank his former position.

But he was equal to the emergency, and with a revolver in either hand, he rang out the death-knell of more than one of his assailants, who were momentarily checked.

Taking advantage of their hesitation, Death Trailer fired again in the faces of his foes and bounded into the thicket with the speed of a deer.

Instantly half a dozen shots rattled after him and he staggered and fell, wounded in the head and leg.

At the same instant three of his enemies rushed forward and threw themselves upon him.

But with the strength of a giant the wounded scout arose to his feet, and hurled them off, and with drawn knife and flashing eyes stood at bay.

Surprised by his determined courage, the three outlaws hesitated, and thus the defier and defied stood in silence, until there came a sound of hoofs, and a ringing voice cried out:

"Hurl yourselves upon him, men; but take him alive."

It was the Bravo Chief who ordered, yet his men were not quick enough to obey, for with the spring of a tiger the scout was upon them; his knife gleamed quickly, and descending with savage force, sought the life of an outlaw.

Raising the stricken man in his strong arms, Death Trailer threw him with herculean force upon his two advancing comrades, and the blow and weight carried them to the ground.

Instantly he bounded away, and dodging into the thicket, ran along with the speed of a race-horse.

Wounded, bleeding, hard-pressed, the scout bounded on, the yells of his pursuers close behind him, their rifles cracking at every sight they caught of their foe, for though the Bravo Chief was most anxious to take Death Trailer alive, he still preferred him dead, rather than not at all.

Suddenly the scout came to a halt. A wide ravine was in his path. It was beyond the power of mortal to clear it, and Death Trailer felt that the time for a death-struggle had come, for his pursuers were not a hundred yards behind him.

No, a gleam of hope shot through his heart—his lasso slung at his back, and a small tree stood on the edge of the ravine.

In an instant the lasso was around the tree, and the scout swung himself down into the ravine by the double line, which he at once pulled after him, and again bounded away, just as his pursuers drew rein at the great open rift.

Dismounting, they beheld the brave foe rushing down the gulch with the speed of a deer and instantly their rifles rattled after him, their bullets cutting up the dirt all around him, and one inflicting a slight wound in his shoulder.

Maddened by the wound Death Trailer turned quickly, dropped upon one knee, and his rifle flashed back in retaliation.

A yell of triumph burst from his lips as he be-

held the effect of his quick shot—an outlaw falling headlong into the ravine.

Then again the scout sped on, while his pursuers, as if more determined than ever to take him, turned down the side of the ravine in the hopes of heading him off.

It then became a mad, hot chase, and nobly did the brave scout settle to his work, for he felt if he could get out of the gulch, and dart into some thicket on the hillside, he might yet escape.

Harder and harder he pressed forward, while his face grew purple with his almost superhuman exertions, and his breath came quick and hard through his parched lips.

Any other man, almost, would have yielded, unable to do more; but Death Trailer was made of sterner stuff, and was determined to press on as long as he had power to place one foot before the other—then he would stand at bay and fight it out to the bitter end—if his foes triumphed, he would die with a deadly record to leave behind him.

Presently he reached the mouth of the ravine, and beheld before him an open space of several hundred yards to the hills.

"Once there and I am safe!" he cried, and on he rushed, while behind him came his pursuers, six in number.

"I'll turn and send one after the Bravo Chief!" he hissed fiercely, and he was in an instant on his knees, rifle raised.

But the Bravo Chief was not among his pursuers; he had doubtless gone off on the hunt for fairer game, when he believed the capture of Death Trailer certain.

But the rifle flashed out nevertheless, and a horse went down, hurling his rider far over his head.

Instantly five rifles poured in a fire upon the daring fugitive, but mounted as they were, and with the scout also moving, the aim was bad, and the bullets whistled harmlessly by.

But in the halt of the scout the outlaws had gained on their foe, and with yells drove their spurs into their horses, for Death Trailer was yet three hundred yards from the hillside, and they but one-third of that distance behind.

There was every hope of their overtaking him, for his long run was telling upon him badly.

And none realized this more than the scout himself, and he nerved himself to the shock that he felt must come, and had no idea of despairing—oh, no, he had met worse odds than five to one before, and conquered them.

But the steep hillside, with the thick underbrush, into which no horseman could penetrate, loomed up before him, and he determined to make another grand struggle to reach it.

Twisting his knife in his belt, and shutting his teeth hard, he bounded forward with renewed and wonderful speed, and for an instant fairly gained upon his enemies; but suddenly a dizziness caused him to stagger, his brain seemed on fire, his head was whirling, and his heart seemed bursting; he could go no further.

Yet, still determined to struggle for life, he wheeled toward his foes, a wild cry escaped his lips, and he essayed to use his revolvers.

But then a darkness swept upon him; he staggered; his weapons dropped from his nerveless hands and he sunk upon the ground—his ears deaf to the cries of the outlaws as they spurred madly forward toward their prey.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RED LILY.

ON dashed the triumphant outlaws toward the fallen scout, their yells echoing among the hills, as they drew rein over their unconscious foe, and quickly dismounted.

But as the foremost outlaw bent over his fallen enemy, there came two sharp reports from the thicket on the hillside, and a man and a steed went down.

At the same moment a horseman dashed out from the shadow of the hill, and in dismay the surprised and frightened outlaws turned and fled, leaving one of their number dead upon the field.

The horseman who had ridden out in full view was quickly followed by a horsewoman, and a glance was sufficient to recognize the Red Lily of the Comanches, and the Prairie Wolf.

Quickly they rode up to where the Scout lay, and while the Red Lily bent over him, with anxiety in her beautiful face, Prairie Wolf neatly took off the scalp of the dead outlaw, and possessed himself of his firearms.

"The great white chief is not gone to the happy hunting-grounds—he lives," said the Red Lily, placing her hand upon the scout's heart.

"Come, let the Red Lily and the Prairie Wolf dress the wounds of their friend," said the young warrior, after he had made himself happy over his triumph, while he seemed to regret the escape of the outlaw who had been dismounted by the scout's shot, and who had mounted behind one of his comrades.

With apparent ease the strong young warrior then raised the form of the scout in his arms, and bore him to the hillside, into which wound a narrow, winding ravine.

Following this for a short distance, they came to a small basin, with a carpet of luxuriant grass, and a covering of thick foliage from the surrounding trees.

In the little basin bubbled up a cool, clear spring, and against the rocky hillside was a wigwam—evidently the temporary abode of the brother and sister.

Upon a soft bed of leaves, over which was spread his blanket, the scout was laid, and the Red Lily at once set to work to dress his wounds, with a skill that proved she had had considerable experience in surgery.

Though painful, and also having bled most freely, fortunately the three wounds of the scout were not of a fatal nature, and after the Red Lily had skillfully dressed them, bandaging them with buckskin cut from her own fine skirt, she set about restoring him to consciousness, for loss of blood and over-fatigue had caused him to swoon away.

For a long time the Red Lily endeavored to restore the scout, and at length a fear came to her heart that he would die; but, the Prairie Wolf came to her aid with the brusque information:

"The fire-water of the pale-face make sick, and make well—try him."

Instantly the Red Lily poured a draught of brandy from the scout's flask into his mouth, and with real feminine tact, bathed his face, hands and chest, with the now precious liquid.

The effect was almost magical, for Death Trailer breathed heavily, a tremor shook his frame, and the dark, fiery eyes were opened.

"Hail the Red Lily of the Comanches—and the Prairie Wolf? Yes, I remember—I fell, and—you drove back the outlaws and saved my life—I am grateful," and the scout held forth his hand, while the maiden replied:

"When the Death Trailer left the Red Lily and Prairie Wolf, their trail was struck, and they fled far from their village; but, it is good, for from their camp they saw the Death Trailer flying from his foes, and they fled before the anger of the fierce Prairie Wolf, who has a scalp at his belt," and the maiden pointed with pride to the gory trophy taken by her brother.

"The Prairie Wolf is brave; he will be a great chief, and the heart of Moochoo will laugh with joy; but my Comanche friends must not linger here, but return to their village."

"No, the Death Trailer is very sick; he must stay quiet until several suns have set, and the Red Lily will care for him, while the Prairie Wolf goes to the great Moochoo and tells him the flower of his heart is safe. Then will the Prairie Wolf return with many warriors, and the Death Trailer shall have a steed to carry him to his people at the fort, for his body is weak, and he cannot walk."

Remonstrance was useless, and Death Trailer was compelled to acknowledge that he was too badly used up to travel, and would be compelled to remain quiet for some days.

Thus was it arranged that the Prairie Wolf should at once set out for the home of his people, and the Red Lily remain to take care of the scout, for that their retreat would be discovered by the outlaws, they had little fear, and in the country of the Comanches, as they were, they had no dread of other enemies.

Selecting the better pony of the two, Prairie Wolf departed for the Comanche village, leaving the Red Lily alone with the Death Trailer.

Yet a keen pair of eyes saw him ride away, and then glanced down into the basin, from a clump of trees upon the hillside.

Those eyes, as he lay quietly upon his bed, the scout encountered, and he started, and attempted to grasp his rifle that lay near, and which the Red Lily had reloaded for him.

"Hold on! durn yer eyes, pardner, don't shoot," hastily cried a loud, pleasant voice, and a moment after a lithe, tall form sprang down into the little basin, and confronted the scout and the Red Lily, while the latter held her rifle covering his broad heart, ready to see if he was friend or foe.

"Well, Wild Harry, in heaven's name what are you doing here?" said Death Trailer, recognizing the man before him as one of the guides and hunters of the fort—a young fellow brave

to recklessness, a thorough frontiersman, for he had been captured by the Indians when a lad, and passed years among them, to, in the end, become their bitter foe.

Often had he and Death Trailer been on a scout together, and no man on the plains would have wanted better company than the young guide and hunter.

"What am I doin' heur, you axes, Death Trailer? Why, I'm a-lookin' at you an' that thar purty gal—lightnin' an' thunder, whar did yer cotch her? But tell her to p'int that weepin' t'other way, 'kase wimmin's fingers is kind o' shaky when playin' with a trigger."

Death Trailer smiled, and told Red Lily that the stranger was his friend, and the maiden put up her rifle, but still kept her eye upon the young guide.

"Yes, but why is it you are here?"

"Now you is jealous—you wanted to be nussed by the gal, and durned ef I blame yer; but, yer see, I come in to interrupt yer leetle housekeepin', 'kase I'm on yer trail."

"On my trail, Harry?"

"Yas; the kurnel's darter, durned ef she ain't a team too, comed inter camp mounted on yer Comanche—"

"Thank God she escaped."

"That's so; but she was driv' hard, 'kase the outlaw devils was a-crowdin' her; but as I was a-sayin' when she comed in an' tole whar she had left you, why the kurnel jist sent me an' Injin Dick, Ole Pete, an' Trapper Bob to look you up, an' ef we couldn't find yer, to hunt up an' see ef yer ghost had tuk the trail for heveng—durned ef this ain't a kind o' heveng, 'specially as this purty gal is heur to play angil."

"And you have found me, Harry."

"I has, an' in durned good comp'ny. Yer see, the other boys tuk another trail, while I jist comed this way, an' I was a-watchin' this lay-out, when I see'd the two reds fotch yer in, an' says I, I'll be on hand ef I'm needed, an' heur I is. Ain't hurt much is yer? jist possomin' to get the gal to nuss yer."

"Yes, Wild Harry, I received three wounds, and in a hard run I had for my life, I lost a great deal of blood, and shall have to lay up for some days—then we will return to the fort together."

"All right, pard, an' I'll jist help in this housekeepin' biz, an' talk love to tber gal. Who is she?"

"The Red Lily of the Comanche."

"The devil?"

"No, she is nearer an angel; she saved my life, with the aid of her brother, whom you doubtless saw ride away," and Death Trailer went on to relate of his first meeting with the Red Lily, and of the adventures that followed, after which he sunk to sleep, conscious that he had two faithful friends to nurse him in his illness. Then in his dreams he saw two faces, both beautiful; one was Kate Linville, the other the Red Lily of the Comanches.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

SLOWLY the days passed away at the fort, for hope had long been deferred, and it was at last believed that the Death Trailer had certainly lost his life, and this thought cast a gloom over all at the fort, especially upon Colonel Linville and Kate.

One by one the scouts had returned, until Old Pete, Indian, or Injin, Dick, as he was often called, and Trapper Bob had returned, each telling the same story—they could find no clew to the fate of the scout.

Yet there was one gleam of hope—Wild Harry yet remained away, and as he was known to be second only to the Death Trailer in daring, prairie craft, and matching the Indian and outlaw in cunning, it was believed that he had struck the scout's trail, or—met with perhaps his fate—death.

The several squadrons had returned to the fort, and brought a sad story from the lower settlements, which had been devastated by the Bravo Chief in his raid; but, as they had had a hard trip, it would not be right to lead them upon another without rest, so Colonel Linville was impatiently biding his time, and at the same time making every preparation to give the outlaws a crushing blow at their very stronghold.

Though Kate Linville avoided Rodney Radcliffe all in her power, he seemed to be her very shadow, and she was forced, not to attract attention to her dislike to him, to often accept his society, and even to sometimes accompany him upon a horseback ride, up or down the river, or a dash across the prairie.

Yet he never referred in any way to their past, whatever that past might have been, but,

upon the contrary, he rendered himself a most agreeable companion.

It was upon one of these rides down the river, one pleasant afternoon, when the sun was near its setting, that Rodney Radcliffe and his fair companion drew rein upon a low bluff overlooking the river, and seemed lost in admiration of the gorgeous masses of clouds, tinged with every hue of the rainbow.

Had they been able to penetrate the density of the thickets behind and upon either side of them, their faces might not have looked so calmly serene, for a deadly danger was creeping upon them.

Nearer and nearer drew the fatal coil—a half circle of men, in whose dark, cruel faces was recognizable the brand of outlaw—they were half a score of the Bravo Chief's picked men—picked for a vile service, and they believed that their game was in their trap.

Nearer and nearer they crept, until the small opening upon the river was reached, and then they paused, like a wild beast preparing for the fatal leap.

Suddenly, with wild yells, they rushed toward Rodney Radcliffe and his fair companion.

The former quickly wheeled his horse and drew a revolver in each hand—the latter turned deadly pale, for at a glance she recognized her foes.

"Oh God! what are we to do?" cried Kate, in an agony of dread.

"Spur right over them—it is our only chance—come!" and the young man was cool, his face pale, but determined.

Instantly the two sprang forward, endeavoring to break the line; but quickly the outlaws closed around them, undaunted by the rattle of Rodney Radcliffe's revolvers.

"All is lost—all is lost!" cried Kate, as the outlaws hemmed them in, and a burly ruffian seized her rein.

But as his hand grasped the leather there came a sharp report from the thicket, and the outlaw fell dead.

Then came another and another, and wild yells were heard, a loud noise, as if some huge animals were breaking through the thicket, and the next instant a horseman appeared upon the scene.

"Ride! ride for your lives! We will cheat them," rung out in cheering tones, and Kate Linville burst forth with one glad cry:

"The Death Trailer!"

"The Death Trailer! the Death Trailer!" was echoed from lip to lip, and the outlaws turned from the offensive to the defensive.

Seeing their act, Rodney Radcliffe seized the rein of Kate's steed in his hand, and driving his spurs deep, the two horses bounded out of the fracas and dashed rapidly away in the direction of the fort.

"Will you leave that man alone to fight our battle?" cried Kate, earnestly.

"That man can take care of himself—it is your safety I am after! Come!" and he rode more furiously on in the direction of the fort, where they arrived after a hard ride of half an hour, to spread consternation by the news they brought.

Instantly Colonel Linville was in the saddle, and followed by a hundred gallant troopers, he rode rapidly away toward the scene which had so nearly proved fatal to his loved daughter and Rodney Radcliffe.

At his side rode Rodney Radcliffe, who was determined to avenge himself, he said, upon the outlaws, and he guided them toward the spot.

A rapid gallop brought them to the spot within an hour's time; but the crack of rifles had died away, the noise of the conflict had ceased.

Here lay the dead body of an outlaw, there another, and further on a renegade Indian with his head dashed in from a heavy stroke.

But outlaws and scout had disappeared, and Colonel Linville felt a dread at his heart that Death Trailer had at last been captured by his bitter foes.

"Strike their trail, Indian Dick, and we will give them a hot chase," ordered the colonel.

In a few moments the half-breed Indian scout struck the trail of the retreating outlaws, and refreshed by their short rest the troopers set off in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER XVII.

ONCE MORE ON THE TRAIL.

To Death Trailer, in his lonely mountain camp, and wounded and suffering as he was, the days passed drearily and slowly away, notwithstanding the kind attention of his beautiful nurse, and the company of Wild Harry.

But to Wild Harry the days were too short,

the nights too long, for his big heart had found its idol—he desperately loved the Red Lily of the Comanches, and was constantly telling the scout that to get the Indian beauty for a wife he would be willing to do anything.

"I tell yer, Death Trailer," he said one day, "that thar gal is jist as purty as a spotted pup; she's jist honey, but I'm glad the bees don't know it, an' I love her as I does my rifle. But then, yer see, she's dead gone on you, an' don't care a darn fur me."

"Yes, Harry, the Red Lily likes you very much, and her regard for me is only such as you would feel for one who had saved your life—Ha! What noise is that?"

Wild Harry was at once on his feet, rifle in hand, and Death Trailer, who had very nearly recovered from his wounds, was also on the alert.

Both men then looked around for the Red Lily, but she was nowhere in sight.

"It is the sound of coming horsemen—ha! that is the war-cry of the Prairie Wolf! Now, Wild Harry, you and I are to stand face to face with those who have been our bitterest foes!"

"I'm ready, durned ef I ain't; by Jerusha!" said Harry, discreetly looking to his weapons, and preparing either for a run or a fight.

But he soon found that neither was necessary, for up the ravine came the Red Lily, Prairie Wolf, and an old chief—the Death Trailer had seen him once before, at the head of a thousand Comanche horsemen, and recognized him as the Mountain Chief, the great Moochoo.

Behind the three came a large number of Comanche braves, all splendidly armed and mounted.

"The chief of the Comanches has come to the lone cabin of the pale-face warrior to thank him for the lives of his children—to tell him that the hatchet is buried between the Comanches and their pale-face brother, though it be war between my braves and his people. But the hearts of the Comanches are glad, and sunshine is in the heart of Moochoo. Will the white brave smoke the pipe of peace with Moochoo?"

"Gladly will I, chief," returned Death Trailer, speaking fluently in the Comanche tongue, in which the old chief had addressed him, and he added: "I saw the young chief of the Comanches in the power of bad men, and I saved his life and made him my brother. The Red Lily was in the hands of the wicked pale-face renegades, and I took her from them and made her my sister. Then those whom I had served saved my life—they saved me from my cruel foes, and brought me here, where my white brother has found me."

"That's so, ole red boss o' the Comanches," put in Wild Harry, in English.

"Here, in this lone camp, the Red Lily has cared for me as a sister would, while the Prairie Wolf went to tell their father, the great Moochoo, that his children were safe. The Death Trailer offers his hand to Moochoo and his braves."

Then followed grunts of satisfaction upon all sides, and judged by the company he kept, Wild Harry also came in for a general hand-shaking.

After the general greeting was over, the old chief presented to Death Trailer a magnificent steed he had brought him, and one which his warriors had stolen from some white settlement, but he did not mention that circumstance.

Not to be considered niggardly, Moochoo then ordered one of his braves to give his horse to Wild Harry; but the scout stepped forward and said:

"No yer don't, chief, 'ka'se I've got a anermile up the ravine better'n any Comanche mustang that ever switched flies with his tail—durned ef I hain't. But I'm obleged to yer the same, an' mebbe I'll come down on yer fur yer gal. Death Trailer, you know their blasted lingo, so jist favor me by rattlin' off what I hev said, fer the eddification of ther ole boss."

Death Trailer translated the thanks of his friend, and then followed a grand feast, for the hand had come well supplied with edibles, and the pipe of peace passed around.

The following day old Moochoo and his warriors started on their return to their village and the Red Lily accompanied them, greatly to the sorrow of Wild Harry.

When Death Trailer bade the Indian maiden farewell, he saw tear-drops trembling in her eyes, and her bosom heaved as if in pain; but he said pleasantly:

"The Red Lily is the sister of the Death Trailer, and ere many moons he will come to her village to see her."

"The Red Lily will droop if he does not come

—her heart will be glad and full of song-birds when he comes."

Thus those two parted, and Death Trailer and Wild Harry were alone in their lonely camp, the latter declaring that "he'd as soon lose his skulp as his heart, 'ka'se it giv' him an awful feelin' under his ribs."

After several days longer rest, Death Trailer pronounced himself as good as new, and one morning at the peep of day the two scouts mounted their steeds, and started upon their return to camp.

They did not press forward with much haste, but rode steadily on until they struck the river, about ten miles below the fort.

As they were turning into the trail leading up the river-bank, the quick eye of the Death Trailer suddenly detected some fresh tracks, and in an instant he dismounted and narrowly examined them.

"Harry, here is a trail I am going to follow; it looks suspicious," he said, remounting, and the two friends rode slowly along for half a mile.

Then they suddenly drew rein, for from their position a strange scene was visible—two persons on horseback in the distance, and around the outer edge of a thicket ten steeds were hitched at equal distances apart.

The trail they had followed was that of the two persons—the one was a man, the other a woman, as they could plainly see through the opening in the thicket, through which the trail led to the river.

At a glance, Death Trailer recognized Kate Linville as the horsewoman—her companion he did not know.

"Harry, there is some mischief going on here; those horses ranged yonder are not from the fort—they belong to outlaws."

"That's so, Trailer, an' yonder is ther game, durned ef 'tain't."

"There are ten horses in sight—large odds, but we must take them," and Death Trailer and his comrade rode into the thicket, and arrived upon the scene just in the nick of time.

When Death Trailer urged his horse into the opening he was a little in advance of Wild Harry, and the outlaws, though greatly surprised at his appearance, believed he was alone, and turned to attack him, just as Rodney Radcliffe spurred away with Kate Linville.

But as the next instant Wild Harry bounded from the thicket with a yell, the outlaws concluded that a large party were coming, and rushed for the nearest cover.

Seeing that Kate Linville and her escort had escaped, and knowing that the odds were fearfully against them, Death Trailer and Wild Harry fired upon their enemies, and then rode toward the river, got under the shelter of the bank, and made a flank movement upon the outlaws, gaining the prairie in safety, and setting off at once for the fort, for they could not believe that the Bravo Chief would venture that near to the outpost without a large force.

Taking a different trail to the fort, they arrived there, shortly after Colonel Linville and his troopers had started off on the hunt for the outlaws, who, at the same time the two scouts had been flying in one direction, had also been flying in another, leaving three of their number dead upon the field.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FRIENDS BUT NOT LOVERS.

WHEN Death Trailer and Wild Harry were discovered approaching the outpost, a wild shout of welcome went up from the troopers, and the gates were thrown open to them.

Having, in a few words, told of his adventures, or rather that he had been wounded and laid up for some time, Death Trailer at once sought the headquarters, when Kate came forward and greeted him with an earnestness almost amounting to affection.

Her warm welcome caused a dark scowl to cross the face of Rodney Radcliffe, and in the eyes of the recipient there came a bright light of joy.

"Mr. Radcliffe, this is Mr. Randolph, my father's chief of scouts, and the gentleman to whom we owe our escape this morning, to whom I owe more than I can ever repay," and Kate Linville laid her hand lightly upon the scout's arm.

The scowl on Rodney Radcliffe's face deepened, and he coolly bowed, while he replied:

"It was very bold in the scout to come to our rescue—I have heard of the Death Trailer often before."

Death Trailer would have spoken kindly in return, but he saw the frown of Rodney Rad-

cliffe, recognized that he looked upon him as a rival, smiled grimly and said nothing.

The following day Colonel Linville and his troopers returned, and greatly rejoiced was he to find that the outlaws had not Death Trailer as a prisoner, for he had failed to overtake the band, and had believed that they had either killed or captured the scout.

By the advice of Death Trailer Colonel Linville determined to defer his attack for the present upon the Bravo Chief, for the scout told him that it was better to await until the outlaws had gone off upon another extended raid, leaving their stronghold comparatively unprotected, and that once their mountain retreat fell, they would be comparatively at the mercy of the soldiers.

Having heard all of Death Trailer's adventures, and becoming more interested in the strange, reserved man, Colonel Linville made of him an almost constant companion, and consulted him in all the duties devolving upon him as commandant on the frontier.

In this way Death Trailer and Kate Linville were thrown daily together, and it was whispered about among both officers and men that the maiden thought far more of the scout than she did of Rodney Radcliffe, who yet lingered at the outpost, as though unwilling to tear himself away from the "Belle of the Border," as Kate was called, for, though there were other fair ladies in the fort, the wives and daughters of the officers, Kate Linville was the favorite.

"Father, who is Ralph Randolph?" asked Kate Linville, one day when the two sat together in the colonel's office.

"His story is soon told, Kate—he was found on the prairie by a traders' train, wounded and supposed to be dying. A mere boy, for he was eighteen then, his sad lot excited sympathy, and the owner of the train had him most tenderly cared for, and brought him back to life. Accompanying his benefactor to St. Louis, his home, the youth was sent by him to college, and afterward took a tour through Europe with his kind friend, who was an old bachelor, and, having no near kindred, made Death Trailer his heir, at his death, seven years ago, upon condition that he would take his name, that of Ralph Randolph. As soon as his benefactor died, Ralph settled up his affairs, and came at once to the Southwest, where, for six years, he has been acting as border scout, hunter and guide."

"But does he know nothing of the past?" asked Kate, deeply interested.

"If he does he never speaks of it to any one, his life up to the time he was found wounded on the prairie is a dead secret. Here he comes now."

As Colonel Linville spoke, the Death Trailer entered, and he said pleasantly:

"Miss Linville, I have trained the animal your father gave you, so that he will serve you well—will you try him in a dash down the river?"

"With pleasure, Mr. Randolph. Will you accompany us, father?"

"No, my daughter, but Mr. Radcliffe will doubtless do so."

"If asked doubtless he would. I prefer not to have the honor of his society," and Kate left the room, to soon after return fully equipped for her ride.

In ten minutes more the two were mounted, and dashing out of the stockade, set off on the trail leading down the river.

A ride of several miles, and they came to where the trail wound along the river-bank, beneath the shadows of a grove of cottonwood, and here the scout drew rein, and the man and the maiden sat silently upon their horses, gazing upon the pretty scenery of woodland, river and prairie.

Upon the scout's face rested a look of nervousness never seen there, while Kate seemed as though troubled with some memory of the past.

"Miss Linville, will you pardon me, if I tell you a secret that I have kept for weeks deeply hid in my heart?" and the voice of Death Trailer was soft, earnest, and full of deep feeling.

"If you make me your confidante, Mr. Randolph, I will never betray your trust," said Kate, idly whipping the leaves with her whip, and striving hard to appear calm.

"Thank you: the secret I have to tell deeply concerns my future happiness. Miss Linville, I am here, only a border scout, and it seems bold in me to sue for the hand of Colonel Linville's daughter; but I am emboldened to do so, because I have loved you from the first hour I saw you, and your kindness toward me has led me to believe that I was not indifferent to you. Also, it was not a scout's camp on the frontier that I intended offering you, but a home far from here,

for I am not all I seem—I am well off in this world's goods, and with your love to brighten my pathway through life, gladly would I leave the rolling prairies behind me, and live elsewhere. Have I, a scout of the plains, offended, in offering my heart's best love to you, Miss Linville, my commandant's daughter?"

The scout paused, and his dark, earnest, womanly eyes, turned with a look of fascination, of hope and of fear upon the maiden by his side.

For a moment Kate Linville was silent; her lips trembled, her face became almost pallid.

Then she bent forward in her saddle, and burst into tears.

Ralph Randolph was shocked, surprised, pained. Why did she weep at what he told her?

Was she bound to Rodney Radcliffe by an engagement, and wept from pity for his hopeless love?

Had he so deeply offended in offering his love?

Such were the thoughts that flashed through the mind of the scout, yet he said nothing, only looked terribly distressed.

At length Kate controlled her emotion, and looking up, held forth her hand.

"Forgive me, Mr. Randolph, but I meant not to pain you—no, you have not offended me in offering your love—I prize it above all things in this world, I frankly tell you. Yet, would to God it had remained untold, for we can never be more to each other than we now are. Do not ask me to explain—trust me, and there let it rest. Perhaps some day you may know me better, and feel that I did not try to lead you on; no, my deep regard for you made me openly show my feeling, when I should not have done so—"

"Then you are engaged to Rodney Radcliffe?" said Death Trailer, sadly.

"Rodney Radcliffe I abhor!" exclaimed Kate almost fiercely.

Then she continued:

"Ask me no more—trust me and we will remain friends as in the past—here is my hand upon it."

The scout took the outstretched hand, drew the gauntlet half off, bent his proud head, and touched his lips to it.

Then he said quietly:

"It shall be as you desire—shall we return now?"

Without another word they set off on their return for the fort, a deep shadow in the heart of both.

CHAPTER XIX.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

WHETHER the keen eyes of Rodney Radcliffe discovered that Death Trailer loved Kate Linville or not, cannot be told; but certain it is, that after the afternoon ride of the scout and maiden together, he redoubled his attentions toward his host's daughter, and haunted her even more than before.

As no signs of an enemy, either Indian or outlaw, had been lately seen about the fort, Kate Linville grew very bold in her rides and walks, and sometimes sauntered up and down the river-bank for a mile or more.

A favorite spot with her, was where a small creek emptied into the river, and upon the shaded point jutting out in between the two streams.

Here, one pleasant afternoon, she rode alone, and turning her faithful steed loose to graze she seated herself upon a log, book in hand.

But instead of reading she sat silently day-dreaming while her right foot nervously patted the ground as though her thoughts were of an unpleasant nature.

Suddenly she started, for a foot-step was heard behind her.

Turning quickly she beheld Rodney Radcliffe, who doffed his hat and said pleasantly:

"Miss Linville, I convinced your father that it was not safe for you to ride out thus alone, and he sent me out in search of you."

"Were there danger about, the Death Trailer would have discovered it—he goes scouting every day," returned Kate.

"The Death Trailer may be at fault sometimes—will you return to the fort with me now?"

There was a flash of rebellion in Kate's eye, and she was about to return some stinging remark, when half a dozen dark forms suddenly sprang from the shadow of the cottonwoods, and four of them hurled themselves upon Rodney Radcliffe, while the two others rushed upon her.

Kate was armed with a revolver presented her by Death Trailer; but it was in the holster of her saddle and she was powerless to use it.

A moment more and she was in the strong

grasp of the two burly ruffians, whom, at a glance she recognized as outlaws of the band of the Bravo Chief.

Then her eyes turned upon Rodney Radcliffe, who though taken by surprise, was making a manly resistance against his four assailants.

But resistance was vain, for in ten minutes after their appearance, Rodney and Kate were bound securely, mounted on their horses, and placed between a guard of two men.

"Come! we must get out of this," said a huge, savage-looking outlaw, who appeared to be the leader.

Instantly the party mounted and moved off, and, as they rode out of the little grove, six more horsemen joined them.

Then, at a rapid gallop, the whole party set off across the prairies, heading for the mountain range, visible far off in the distance.

"Well, Miss Linville, my suspicions were right—we are caught in a trap," said Rodney Radcliffe, quietly, as they rode along.

"Yes; but the Death Trailer will discover the trail of the outlaws, and my father and his troopers will soon be in pursuit—I feel a hope of speedy rescue, Mr. Radcliffe," and Kate's tone was certainly most hopeful.

Darkness at last settled upon the prairie, but still the outlaws pushed on until they reached the range of foot-hills, from whence Kate Linville had started upon her lonely ride to the fort, mounted upon Comanche.

Here they went into camp, and certainly every attention was shown Kate, for a shelter of brush was built for her, and a tempting meal placed before her.

Fatigued by their long ride, both Kate and Rodney slept well, and when the sun arose the next morning, their eyes glanced back over the rolling prairie.

Alas! no band of troopers were in sight, and dread rested heavily upon the heart of Kate Linville.

At length breakfast was over, and all in readiness to continue their flight toward the stronghold.

As they moved off an exclamation from Rodney Radcliffe caused all to look over the prairie, in which direction his eyes were turned.

Far off, just coming over a roll in the prairie, they beheld a dark object riding on their trail at a swinging gallop.

The leader of the outlaws turned his glass upon the approaching object, and said quickly:

"It is the Death Trailer, following like a hound on our trail—and he is alone."

CHAPTER XX.

UNMASKED.

ALTHOUGH the outlaws could see that there was but one man on their trail, yet they exhibited signs of uneasiness, and soon had their prisoners mounted, and set off again on their flight, for such it had now become.

Kate seemed now more hopeful, and as the turns in the trail up the mountains gave her a view of the prairie, she would anxiously gaze upon the daring horseman who was coming swiftly in pursuit.

Under other circumstances, she might have felt that it was madness for one man to attempt to cope with a band of desperadoes; but already she had seen the scout at work, and felt that he could accomplish almost anything he undertook.

Rodney Radcliffe also seemed nervous, after his discovery of the Death Trailer on their track, and kept silent; but his eyes frequently sought the solitary form far off on the plain, as if he also had confidence in the man to in some way outwit the outlaws.

With renewed speed the little band pressed on, and when they encamped the following night, half of the number stood guard.

But the darkness passed away unbroken by the crack of a rifle, or the death-cry of a surprised sentinel, and again the flight continued, until at length the stronghold came in view, the party crossed the ford, and were soon upon the plateau.

Rodney Radcliffe and Kate were at once conducted to the headquarters of the Bravo Chief, and the maiden soon found herself again in the comfortable room, from which the scout had rescued her.

Slowly the day dragged away to the poor girl, who was perfectly worn out by her long and hard trip, and she was glad when night came that she might rest.

The same old negress attended her, and all was done for her comfort that the stronghold

could afford, yet she was miserably unhappy, and for long hours lay upon her bed weeping bitterly.

At length she dropped to sleep, to dream that Death Trailer had again rescued her and that she was his promised wife.

With a start she awoke, to find the bright sunshine penetrating her room, and finding that it was late, she quickly arose, and ate heartily of the tempting breakfast brought her by the old negress.

"The chief wishes to see you, lady."

Kate started, and beheld before her the youthful and handsome outlaw lieutenant, Halford.

"I will go to him, sir, for I would know why this outrage has been perpetrated," said Kate, with spirit.

Leading the way, Lieutenant Halford conducted her across the hallway into a large front room, which looked almost like a curiosity-shop, for in his years of outlaw life the chief had collected many trophies, which adorned the walls of his room upon every side.

In a large easy-chair, near a table, covered with books and writing materials, sat a tall man, dressed in a Mexican lancer's uniform.

His face was covered by a heavy black beard, and his hair hung in wavy masses upon his shoulders.

He was certainly a splendid specimen of manhood, and yet in his handsome face there was a look of cruelty and recklessness.

As Kate entered the chief arose politely, and bowing low, said in a deep, stern voice:

"Be seated, lady."

Kate quietly took the proffered chair, while she said haughtily:

"I am glad that you desire to see me, sir, for I would know why I have been made the prisoner of a robber chief."

"Ha! my lovely Miss Linville, your pride is not broken, I see, by your captivity; but I will explain: 'Booty and beauty' is an old watchword of gentlemen of my profession, and having gained considerable of the former by hard knocks, I desired to honor my castle with the latter, and deemed you the fairest representative of your sex on our wild frontier."

The Bravo Chief had spoken in a tone of mock earnestness, and his manner caused a thrill of dread to clutch at the heart of the poor girl; but she replied quickly:

"Booty is what you have shed blood and committed the most heinous of crimes for—so name your price for my safe return to my father, and you shall have it, sir."

"I could name no price, Miss Linville—you are beyond price in my eyes; no ransom would buy you."

"What! can you, bearing the form of a man, dare insult me, a poor, helpless girl, with the thought that you would keep me here—to live in your crime-stained home, and become worse than the vilest wretch of your vile band?"

Kate arose quickly to her feet, her form drawn to its greatest height, her eyes flashing, and her whole face full of haughty scorn for the man before her.

"Be seated, Miss Linville; I meant not to insult you; I had said that you were beyond price in my heart, for I love you."

"Love me! you, a robber, love me, an innocent woman—out upon such base regard as you can feel."

"Yes, I love you, Kate Linville, and I brought you here to prove that love, for with you my life is one long night of gloom. With you, in the sunlight of your love, my life will be happy even in its surroundings of crime, danger, and desolation."

"Hold, sir, I will not listen to such language from one who has disgraced the form of man who has reveled in carnage and crime, and who has been the dastard to tear me from my old father's protection."

"You doubtless believe that your friend, this Death Trailer, can save you here, as he did once before; but that is impossible. Your father and all his troopers I could hurl back from my stronghold—I am chief here, and I dread no power that can be brought against me."

Kate Linville covered her face with her hands, as though to shut out some terrible nightmare, and then said earnestly, almost imploringly:

"Have you no mercy—are you worse than the very wolves of your mountains?"

"I have told you, Miss Linville, that I love you—I will now prove to you that I speak the truth; that it is no idle tale of the hour, and you shall know me as I really am; you shall know how I risked life, everything, to possession of you—behold me as I am!"

The heavy beard, and wig of long hair

quickly removed, and with a cry of horror Kate Linville started back, crying:

"Oh, God! you, Rodney Radcliffe, you are the man whom they call the Bravo Chief?"

"True as gospel, Kate—I am the Bravo Chief, and you now know that I love you."

Kate Linville gave one loud cry of fear, and sunk into a swoon, while her captor stood silently gazing down upon her, a look of fiendish triumph upon his hard, stern face.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEMAND AND THREAT.

LIKE a hound on the track, Death Trailer followed the track of the outlaws, for when Kate remained absent from the fort for hours, he became alarmed, and set out to look her up.

His experienced eye soon found her trail, and he was not long in drawing a conclusion when he came to the spot where the capture had taken place.

Like the wind he sped back to the outpost, and made known what had occurred, after which he set off alone on the trail, it having been decided that Colonel Linville should follow soon after, with every man he could draw from the outpost, and under the guidance of Wild Harry and the other scouts.

Well knowing that he could do nothing single-handed, Death Trailer determined to at first discover that Kate was really a prisoner, and the real number of her captors, after which he had another plan in view.

The second night of encampment the scout wormed himself near the outlaw camp, counted their numbers, and beheld both Kate and Rodney Radcliffe, and a pang of jealousy shot through his heart at the thought that she would have the young trader to comfort her in her captivity.

Having gained all the knowledge desired, he went back to his steed, wrote a note in pencil to Colonel Linville, telling him all he had discovered, and stuck it on a stick right on the trail, well knowing that the keen eyes of Wild Harry would not pass it by.

Then he set off in another direction from the one he had been pursuing, and after a hard ride, came to the top of a high range of hills.

In the valley below, upon either side of a winding river, were thousands of teepees, and he knew the village of the Comanches was before him.

Boldly riding down the mountain-side, he headed toward a guard of Indians who were watching a herd of ponies, and was soon discovered by them.

At first there was considerable excitement evinced at sight of him; but then one of their number rode forward, and Death Trailer recognized him as a warrior who had come with the old chief Moochoo to visit him.

Each greeted the other in a most friendly manner; but it was with regret that the scout learned that the chief, Red Lily, Prairie Wolf, and a large band of warriors had gone to the northward on a grand hunt.

"The heart of the pale-face is sad, that the chief and his children are away. Let the brave after the chief, and tell him to come to the place where the three rivers meet, and the belts of his warriors shall be heavy with scalps, the garments of his people shall be full of good things, and even the boys of his tribe shall have robes to ride."

The Indian's eyes glittered with savage joy, and he answered.

"The great pale-face, the Death Trailer, has spoken well. Red Arrow will go like a bird after the chief, and tell him all that the great scout has told him. Then will Moochoo fly to the place where the three rivers kiss each other, and the heart of all will be glad, and the smile of the Great Spirit will be upon his people."

Red Arrow has spoken well—let the Death Trailer feel that he is a great warrior," and the scout turned to ride away; but the hospitable warrior would not hear to it, and carried him into the village, where he presented him to the chief, and as the good pale-face who had saved the Lily of the Comanches.

When the Red Arrow mounted, and accompanied by a chosen band set out to find the chief, the Death Trailer was feasted and sojourned with great honor.

Knowing that his steed needed rest, the scout remained in the Indian village until the following morning, and then set out for the stronghold of the Bravo Chief.

The following day he arrived to find that Colonel Linville and his gallant troopers were already drawing their coil around the outlaw den, waiting for the rescue of Kate Linville.

"Thank God you have come, Randolph—now

I have work for you," and Colonel Linville wrung the scout's hand.

"I am ready, sir."

"Good! Now I wish you to meet the chief under flag of truce, and tell him if he will restore my daughter to me in honor and safety I will give him ten thousand dollars—here, I have the money—and return to my fort, without attacking him. If he does not restore me my daughter, if harm befall her, or insult be breathed in her ear, tell him, Death Trailer, that I'll not rest day or night until I have hung every mother's son of his dastard band, and that I'll burn him at the stake!"

That the colonel was in deadly earnest Death Trailer and all well knew, and the scout mounted a fresh steed to go upon his dangerous errand, while he said quietly:

"Shall I offer a ransom for Mr. Radcliffe, also, colonel?"

"By all means—I had forgotten him in my deep sorrow."

Then Death Trailer rode away, and approached the fort, where stood the guard, fully a score in number, for the scouts had reported to the Bravo Chief that the troopers had arrived in the valley.

With his arms raised above his head, in token of peace, the scout rode forward, and crossed the river, one of the outlaws hailing him, and telling him to come on.

Arriving upon the other shore the score of men crowded around him, all eager to see the great Death Trailer, who for years had been their most deadly enemy.

"Men, I would see your chief—I bear a message to him from Colonel Linville," said the scout.

"I will show yer whar he is, but durned ef I don't think yer knows ther ropes o' this ranch as well as I does—come, pard, an' ef yer lose yer skulp don't blame me, 'kase yer's puttin' your own head inter the lion's mouth."

"Lead on," sternly said the scout, and his guide set out for the plateau.

Upon the piazza of his cabin sat the Bravo Chief, grim and stern, and a look of devilish determination seemed to flash into his eyes as Death Trailer advanced, for he recognized him at a glance.

Having resumed the disguise of his false beard and long hair, he was, of course, unknown to Death Trailer as other than the Bravo Chief, and as the scout halted in front of him he said rudely:

"Well, sir, you have dared place yourself in my power, have you?"

"Yes, I came under a law that even savages obey—that of a truce."

"You come here as a spy, Sir Scout."

"Therein you lie—I have been here before and know your stronghold as well as do you."

"By your own confession you are a spy, and should be hung assuch."

"Bah! you dare not execute your threat, for if you moved one finger to order my death, I would send a bullet through your heart; but I did not come here to talk of myself, but to deliver a message from Colonel Linville."

The forehead of the Bravo Chief had turned pallid at the threat of the scout, and he said quickly.

"What message do you bear?"

"I ask the ransom of Miss Linville, for the sum of ten thousand dollars, and the promise to return to the fort without attacking you."

"Fair proposals—suppose I refuse them?"

"Your stronghold shall be attacked, your followers hung, and yourself burned at the stake."

"Did Colonel Linville send me this message?" and the Bravo Chief sprung to his feet.

"He did."

"Tell him his daughter is safe; but that I have given her one week to agree to certain terms I have offered her—at the end of that time I will bring her to terms in my own way, if she refuses. Tell him this, and also that if he wants his daughter to come and get her—now, curse you; be gone!"

Death Trailer made no movement to go, but said, in a voice that rung threateningly:

"I will bear your reply; but hear me, chief, if harm befall Miss Linville, you shall rue the day that you were born."

Without another word, the scout turned and rode away, and in an hour's time was again in the troopers' encampment.

CHAPTER XXII.

A DARING ALLY.

COLONEL LINVILLE listened to the response of the Bravo Chief, with stern face and burning eyes, while his teeth were firmly set with determination.

"You said that squads of guards could be so placed as to entirely surround the stronghold?" he said, quietly.

"Yes, sir; I will take my detachment of scouts and show them each place where I wish a guard left, and then to-night they can guide the troops to their position."

"How many men would you put in each guard?"

"A non-commissioned officer and eight men—this will leave you a hundred men to guard this ford, the only means of escape for the outlaws in force, and the chain of sentinels will prevent any small body of men from getting out."

"A good idea—then, when old Moochoo and his warriors come, we will attack—ay, we will carry this stronghold."

"We will, colonel," and Death Trailer walked away to call his detachment of scouts.

By nightfall a dozen squads of troopers, each under the lead of a guide, moved out of camp to take up their different positions, and thus form a chain of sentinels around the outlaw stronghold.

Utterly worn out, Death Trailer sought the ravine, where he had pitched his lonely camp, and threw himself down to rest, rolled in his serape, and with his horse feeding near him upon the rich grass.

How long he slept he knew not, but he was awakened by a light touch, and springing to his feet beheld before him a slight form, enveloped in a blanket.

"Let the pale-face chief not fear a foe—it is the Red Lily," said a sweet voice which Death Trailer at once recognized.

"The Red Lily is welcome; but how did she find me here?" asked the scout in surprise.

"The Red Lily was coming back to the village with many braves, when she met the Red Arrow and he told her of the visit of the Death Trailer to the great Moochoo, and the words he bore for the chief's ears. The Red Lily told the Red Arrow that Moochoo and the Prairie Wolf, with their braves, had gone further to the north while she was returning to the village, and that she would come with her braves to the aid of her white brother—and she has come."

"It is noble in the Red Lily; but how did she find me here?"

"The Red Lily was on the hill when the sun went to sleep, and saw the white scout come here, and she sought him; but the Red Lily kept her warriors back, for the braves of the pale-faces are not yet friends to her people."

"It was wise in the Red Lily; now I will go with her, and will tell her braves that they shall have many scalps if they will bury the hatchet with their white brothers and join with them in the attack upon the stronghold."

"The Red Lily will lead her braves to the attack—let the Death Trailer come," and the Red Lily moved away.

Silently the scout obeyed, and in a walk of half an hour they came to a ravine, in which were crowded fully two hundred Comanche warriors, silent and stern.

As the scout followed the warden through the curves a grunt of satisfaction greeted them, showing that the Indians were most willing to form an alliance with the Death Trailer in an attack upon the outlaws.

Having sought out several of the leading chiefs of her band, the Red Lily presented the Death Trailer to them, and seated in a circle around a small fire, which kept the pipes alive, they commenced discussing a plan of attack.

The conference lasted for half an hour, and that it was satisfactory to the Death Trailer, the following note, which he sent by an Indian brave to Colonel Linville will prove.

"DEAR SIR:—I am in the Comanche camp, where the Red Lily has two hundred warriors under her command. One of the number is a half-breed, once a member of the band of the Bravo Chief, and he will lead us by a secret path up the river, where there is only a small guard, which we will capture quietly, and then move on the plateau. As I have no confidence in the word of the Bravo Chief, I think it best to make the attack at once, and by secretly gaining the interior of the stronghold it will give us a great advantage. I will start at once for the quarters of the chief, so as to prevent harm to Miss Linville, and will engage the outlaws until you can come up. It would be well to send word to each picket to attack from their positions, as soon as they hear the alarm of firing in the fort, and the noise of my attack will be the signal for you to charge the fort, which I think you can easily carry, while I will see that the guns on the hills are silenced, so as not to annoy you. Pardon my suggestions, and seeming orders to you, sir, my commander; but I am confident you will find I act only for the best."

RANDOLPH.

Having dispatched this note, written in lead-pencil by the firelight, the scout signified his

readiness to be on the move, and leaving a guard over their horses, the long line of warriors glided silently away, with Death Trailer and Red Lily at their head, and looking like grim specters of the mountains going to a carnival of death.

After several miles were passed over the column came to the river-bank, where the half-breed guide plunged boldly in and struck out for the other shore.

Silently and fearlessly Death Trailer, the Red Lily, and the line of warriors followed, they having left all unnecessary apparel behind them in camp, and with their weapons held above their heads with one hand, they swam boldly for the other shore.

Death Trailer was thoroughly prepared for just such an emergency, and his rifle and revolvers were securely bound up in oil-skin, which wholly protected them, so that he could aid the Red Lily.

But the maiden swam like a fish, and needed no aid, and arrived upon the other shore as ready for the fray as any warrior of her band.

Here the line came to a halt, while Death Trailer and a dozen braves, guided by the half-breed, moved upon the outlaw picket, stationed only a short distance away.

At this point the river wound against the mountain-side, which overhung it in a precipice, hundreds of feet in height.

Into this wall of rock was a narrow chasm, worn by a small stream, that had worn its way deeper and deeper each century, until it had cut the cliff almost in twain.

Into this cut Death Trailer and his small band glided, and after a short scramble over the slippery rocks came to the pathway which wound up the hillside.

Here was stationed the outlaw picket of four men, and unmindful of danger three slept on their blankets, while the fourth stood lazily leaning against a tree.

From the dark mouth of the gulch sprung the dark forms, with cat-like spring, and each outlaw found himself in a grasp of iron.

The struggle was short, savage, and ended in the death of the four outlaws.

Silently the deed had been done, and then Death Trailer dispatched a warrior to bring up the band, for the secret entrance to the stronghold had been won.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE DEATH-STRUGGLE.

Like grim specters the warrior band glided up the steep pathway, until through a ravine in the hillside they came in view of the plateau.

All was quiet in the outlaw camp, and only in the quarters of the Bravo Chief was a light visible.

Having arranged his plan of attack, Death Trailer turned to his beautiful ally, and said:

"Now comes the work for warriors—let the Red Lily remain concealed here until the belts of her braves are heavy with scalps."

"The Red Lily has no squaw's heart—she will go with her braves," proudly returned the maiden, and seeing that remonstrance was useless, Death Trailer yielded consent.

Then he selected fifty of the warriors to lead against the Bravo Chief's quarters, and divided the remainder into three bands to attack the cabins of the men.

Then, with yells that echoed and re-echoed through the valleys and mountains, the band of braves dashed from their covert to the work before them.

Leading his men directly upon the Bravo's quarters, Death Trailer soon sprung, rifle in hand, upon the piazza and dashed into the cabin.

Here a dozen guards, though taken by surprise, rose up and poured in a volley which brought down several Comanche braves, while their comrades hurled themselves fiercely upon their foes.

Then the carnage began in earnest, the outlaws were aroused and rushed forth, arms in hand to repel the attack, and incessantly roared the fire of rifle, and was heard the yell of triumph, or shriek of despair.

To add to the turmoil, the hurrahs of the troopers, and the rattle of their pistols were heard as they charged and carried the ford, while a circle of fire almost surrounded the stronghold as the different squads of pickets moved to the attack of the outlaw guards in their front.

Presently a bright light shot up from several of the outlaw cabins, and the fire-flend revealed amid the scene of carnage, and shed its lurid glow over the whole scene.

Dashing hither and thither were riderless horses, and droves of cattle, bellowing in fright,

rushed over the plateau, trampling down women and children, mad with fear.

Upon the borders of the thickets, behind large trees, and from the cabins flashed forth the rifles of the assailed and assailants, while above all rung the wild war-cries of the Comanches, and the cursing and shouts of the outlaws.

All was a chaos of confusion, a death revel until suddenly the clear notes of a bugle was heard, and from the timber back of his cabin, dashed the Bravo Chief and two-score of his men, who half an hour before had ridden off on a reconnaissance around his line of pickets.

"You fight with your necks in a halter, so at them for your lives," rung out the stern voice of the Bravo Chief, and cheered by his presence the outlaws rallied, retreated to the cabin and here made a stand.

Seeing the movement of the Bravo Chief, and knowing that if he gained the position it would give him a great advantage, for it commanded the plateau, and the cliff would be at his back, and the cabin in his front, Death Trailer called upon his warriors to drive them back, and rapidly their rifles rung out.

But the impetuous charge of the outlaws was irresistible, and the scout felt that the Bravo Chief would carry all before him, so he called to his braves to hold them in check as long as possible, and then endeavor to join their comrades fighting at the cabins of the men.

Calling to the Red Lily to follow him, he darted into the quarters of the chief, and the next instant was face to face with Kate Linville, who, pale, alarmed and trembling, stood silently by an open window.

"Miss Linville, I have come to save you," cried the scout and he seized the fair form in his strong arms, bounded through the open door and sped along the base of the cliff, closely followed by the Red Lily.

After a run of several hundred yards he reached the thicket at the top of the path, leading into the valley below, and here he halted.

"Miss Linville, here you will be safe—remain here until my return, and the Red Lily of the Comanches will protect you."

"The Red Lily of the Comanches will protect the White Lily of the pale-faces," replied softly the Indian maiden, and as she spoke there came the tramp of iron hoofs, and like an avalanche there rushed by a squadron of troopers, with Colonel Linville at their head.

"My father! my father!" cried Kate, but he heard her not, and the column swept on in the headlong charge.

A moment after the Death Trailer darted away, and in the glare of the burning cabins Kate and the Red Lily saw him join the troopers, mount the steed of one who had fallen, and then his wild war-cry rung out as he led the charge upon the cabin.

A most desperate struggle now ensued, for the outlaws were now all congregated in and around the cabin, and at the base of the cliff, while their foes, both troopers and Comanches, were now allied in the attack, and were two to one against them.

But the Bravo Chief was no man to yield tamely, and determined to sell his life dearly.

Then, as Kate Linville and the Red Lily watched with straining eyes, they saw the Death Trailer reach the cabin, followed by a few troopers and Comanches, and the next moment they were met upon the piazza by the Bravo Chief himself, his sword in one hand, a revolver in the other.

Then the two sides mingled, the war-cry of the scout arose above the din, and the red and the white maidens saw no more—all was a scene of confusion, carnage and desperation.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE BRAVO CHIEF.

"GREAT Heaven! who is that man?" cried Death Trailer, as he sprung upon the piazza and was met by none other than Rodney Radcliffe, his eyes ablaze, his sword dripping, and his revolver rattling forth death-knells.

"It Bravo Chief—me know 'im; me kill 'im!" replied the half-breed guide, who was by his side, and as he spoke he raised his lance as though to run him through.

But the Death Trailer struck down his lance, and cried:

"If the Bravo Chief is Rodney Radcliffe, he is my game!"

Then rung out the wild war-cry, and springing forward, the knife-blade of the scout clashed against the sword of the Bravo Chief.

Both men knew that the death-struggle for one, perhaps both of them, had come.

Two braver men never met, nor two of grander physique, or of more striking appear-

ance, and involuntarily both sides fell back to leave the two to fight to the bitter end.

But the scout was not desirous of a lull in the combat, and with the spring of a tiger was upon his foe, and the death-struggle began—ended, and Death Trailer arose—the victor.

His knife had sunk deep into the side of the Bravo Chief.

Dismayed at the loss of their leader, the prairie brigands turned to fly. The joy of the Comanche braves was complete, for they bounded after them like bloodhounds, and loud and wild arose the despairing shriek of a victim upon every side until at length the noise of conflict died away, the shouts of the troopers, the yells of the Indians ceased, and only the hum of the victors' voices broke the silence.

Into his own room the Bravo Chief was borne, sorely wounded and dying; but his active brain was yet at his command, and his flashing eyes roved eagerly over the faces of his conquerors.

"Scout, I would see Miss Linville. Tell her to come to me," he said in a firm voice.

The Post Scout sent after the maiden, and beckoned to Colonel Linville to approach, for in another part of the fray he had just heard of the fall of the leader of the outlaws.

"What! that man the Bravo Chief? Why that is Rodney Radcliffe!" cried the old officer in surprise.

"I am Rodney Radcliffe, the Bravo Chief—I played a deep game, old man, and I lost," replied the wounded man, while Colonel Linville in silent surprise stood near.

A moment after Kate Linville and the Red Lily came into the room. The daughter was in folded in her father's arms—both too happy to speak.

"You have a lifetime before you. I stand on the brink of the grave—listen to me," almost rudely said the Bravo Chief, and Kate gazed timidly upon him, while she trembled violently.

"Kate Linville, I would have you know who I am; I would have your father know why I so dogged your path. Colonel Linville," and the chief seemed to speak with great difficulty, "do you remember Lieutenant Rodney Rolland?"

"He who killed his commander, deserted, and went to Mexico, where it was said he became a plotter against the Government, which afterward captured and shot him?"

"Yes; but the Mexican Government never shot him. They captured him, confined him in prison, sentenced him to death, and when he escaped gave out that he was shot. Colonel Linville, my right name is Rodney Radcliffe Rolland!"

"What!"

"True. I it was who freed a number of Mexican prisoners condemned to death, organized them into a band, and became the terror of the Rio Grande. As I grew in strength of numbers, and settlements dotted this frontier, I came hither and established my fortress, and here I have held a power which you well know. Yet, although an outlaw chief, I have managed to steal away in dull seasons for my own enjoyment, and, three years ago, when visiting in the city, I met and loved your daughter. I was reported rich, supposed to be of good family, and had the *entree* into society, and had I won the love of your daughter I would have given up my evil life. But she refused my offer, though admitting that she liked me as a friend. Then it was I plotted to secure her anyhow, and arranged with a young girl to pretend to be my sister, and I entered her at the Academy where Kate Linville was at school, and the two became great friends. The following year I was again in the city, and then, by the aid of my supposed sister, Florence, at a pleasant little gathering one evening, I proposed a mock marriage with Kate Linville, and after considerable hesitation she consented, and a paid tool of mine, but a minister of the Gospel notwithstanding, performed the ceremony."

"Great Heaven! did you do Kate this wrong?" cried Colonel Linville, while the maiden stood like a statue, a face as white as snow.

"We were really married, Kate believing it a mock-marriage; but, I quickly undeceived her, pleaded my love as an excuse, and told her of my whole plot. To my surprise, she banished me forever from her presence, forced me to take the girl, Florence, from the school, and thus we parted, to meet again at the fort, where I visited you under a forged letter to gain possession of my wife. Having failed once, to capture her, or have my men capture us both, through the remarkable pluck of that man, I bided my time until I was at last successful. When your messenger, the scout, offered me ransom, yesterday, I refused, for I had laid a plan which would

bring Kate to terms. What that plan was it now matters not. You have conquered, and I am dying. You are avenged for the insult upon your daughter, and the Death Trailer is revenged by my fall, for the injury I have done him in the past, for it was my hand that attacked his home, destroyed it, murdered his parents, and left him for dead among the ruins, while his young sister was borne off into captivity."

"A captive you say? Was she not slain?" cried the Trailer, breathlessly.

"No; the Comanches were my allies then, and she fell to the lot of old Moochoo, and—there she stands!"

"The Red Lily my little sister? This news is too good to be true," said the Death Trailer, almost dazed by what he had heard.

"Yet old Moochoo will tell you that she is not his daughter—that he took her, a little child, from her frontier home. The Red Lily is your sister, if you are Ralph Randolph, whose uncle, of the same name, found you wounded upon the prairie. You see I know you—that I kept well informed of all that transpired in my dominions; but the end has come, and the Bravo Chief must yield to the fate of all—death."

The bold, wicked man, he who had for years been the terror of the border, ceased speaking, and pressed hard against the wound in his side, as though to stop the life-flow that was slowly oozing out.

Around him stood Colonel Linville, Kate, the Death Trailer, the Red Lily, Wild Harry, and a score of troopers, all gazing silently down upon the dying Bravo Chief, while pity welled up in the breast of Kate Linville for one whom she had known in happier days, and who had so fallen below the savage natures of even his Indian followers.

CHAPTER XXV. CONCLUSION.

WITH the last shadow of darkness the spirit of the Bravo Chief passed away, and with the first peep of day there rode into the stronghold old Moochoo and his warriors, and Colonel Linville and the Comanche chief, for a long time foes, met as friends.

A long conference followed, and the grasping old chief yielded his claim to the Red Lily for the consideration of the spoils of the outlaw stronghold, which Colonel Linville cheerfully yielded to him.

The following day, at the head of his troopers, the commandant started from the stronghold on his return to the fort, the dead having been buried and the wounded cared for.

By his side rode Kate, happy in her release. Behind them came the Death Trailer and the Red Lily, who, in listening to her brother's revelations of their past life, gradually recalled the days of her childhood, and then came a clear remembrance of her parents and brother Ralph.

Need I further relate how the gallant Rio scout soon discovered the reason why Kate Linville had refused his love, and in asking her again to become his wife, how gladly she consented?

Or to tell how Irene Randolph, once the Red Lily of the Comanches, fell in love with Wild Harry the hunter, and becoming his wife, settled down in a lovely frontier home to pass their lives in peace and utmost happiness?

THE END.

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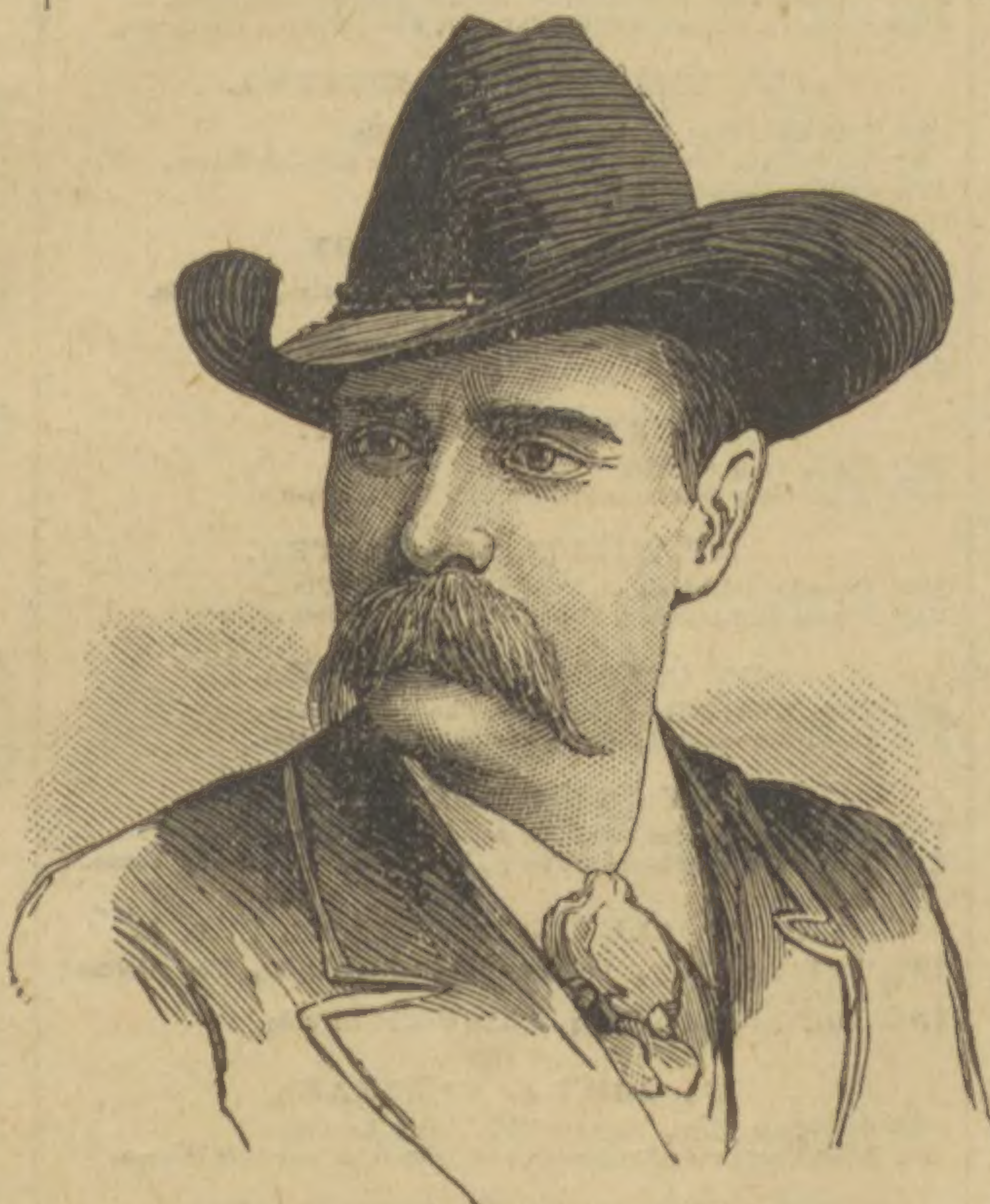
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